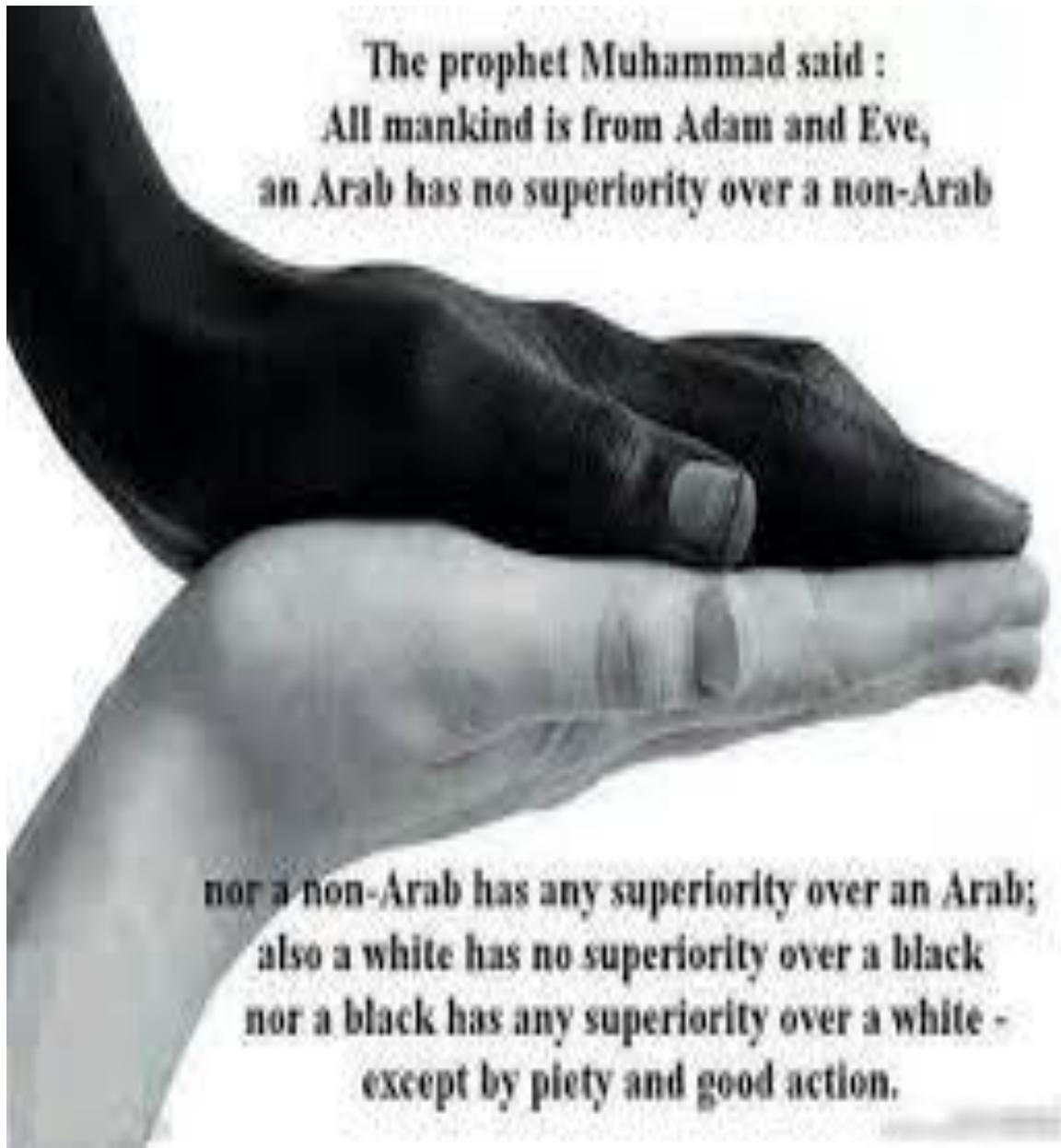


Is Islam also for African people?



Authored by Musa Millington

الحمد لله رب العالمين و العاقبة للمتقين و لا عدوان الا على الظالمين و اهل بيته و سلم عليه و صلى الله عليه و سلم.

أما بعد

I have chosen to write a treatise regarding this topic because I have been informed that some brothers of African decent have left Islam upon the premise that the religion is anti-black and that Arabs enslaved Africans. In my effort to be concise I have chosen not to answer spurious doubts regarding several verses of the Qur'an and narrations of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) as the use of these sources by missionaries, islamophobes and black nationalists tends to be attempts of deliberate misinterpretation.

Upon analyzing the topic at hand I have divided this treatise into the following sections:

1. What is racism?
2. The condemnation of racism in Islam
3. A response to the statement that Islam isn't for Africans
4. Addressing the roots of Arab prejudice toward Africans
5. The reasons for raising this topic to Africans
6. Conclusion

May Allah make this a means of guidance for Non-Muslims and as a means of information for the Muslims who may have been previously unaware of this matter.

Written by: Brother Musa Millington

1. What is Racism?

According to Collin's Dictionary **racism or racialism is the hostile or oppressive behaviour towards people because they belong to a different race. It is also the belief that some races are innately superior to others because of hereditary characteristics.**

In Islam **racism is one of the many manifestations of *Jahileeyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance).** It is seen as such because the racist is ignorant regarding the fact that the creation of different colours, races and ethnicities is from Allah's signs. Allah has said:

“And from his signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the differences between your languages and your colours. These are all signs for those who have knowledge” [Ruum: 22]

Imam As Sa'di said regarding the differences between languages and colours: “With the fact that you [human beings] are many and different although they all come from one source. Where the letters come from is one source and with this one does not find two voices being exact, **likewise the colours (of mankind) are not similar in every aspect except that one would find differences in them to distinguish one from the other.**” [Sa'di 684]

Secondly, by using the criteria of skin tone and ethnicity as a determinant, **the racist casts aside criteria such as religion and good character in the formation of his/her social relationships and interactions.** The racist doesn't share his love amongst the people as Islam has prescribed. Rather the love of the racist is only shared amongst those of his colour, clan or tribe. Hence, stereotyping, prejudice and oppression become justified based upon ethnicity and colour rather than the deeds of the specific individual.

Thirdly, racism is a manifestation of pride which is prohibited in Islam. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said that no one who has pride would enter into paradise. After making that statement a companion questioned him regarding pride and he defined it as the rejection of truth and looking down at others. [Narrated by Imam Muslim] **The racist by definition is therefore an individual who is filled with pride since he sees himself as superior by virtue of his skin colour and ethnicity.**

2. The condemnation of racism in Islam

There are several verses of the Qur'an which demonstrate that the colour of one's skin and ethnicity isn't a determining factor regarding one's status as a Muslim. Rather, one's status as a Muslim is determined by one's knowledge and righteousness. Allah has said in his book:

“**Verily the best of you are the most righteous,**” [Hujuraat: 49:13]

The great scholar of Qur'an, Ibn 'Abbas said regarding this verse: “So a man says to another man I am better than you! **But no one is better than another except by *Taqwa*** (fear of Allah and doing righteous deeds).” Allah has also said:

“Allah raises those who believe amongst you those who have knowledge in levels.” [Mujadalah: 11]

Likewise, there are several statements of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) which show us:

- Ethnicity is not a criteria in Islam to determine one's status.
- Racism is clearly condemned and prohibited in Islam.

The narrations of the Prophet regarding ethnicity not being criteria are as follows:

- On the authority of Abu Tharr (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said to him, “Look, for **verily you are not better than a white or a black person** except if you exceed him in *Taqwa*.” Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad
- On the authority of Abu Huraria (رضي الله عنه) the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said: “**Verily Allah does not look at your colour and features** but rather he looks at your hearts and actions.” Narrated by Imam Muslim
- On the authority of Abi Nadrah Al Mundhir Ibn Maalik Ibn Quta'ah he said someone who heard a sermon of the Messenger of Allah told me that he said... “**Indeed there is no excellence of the Arab over the Non-Arab or the Non-Arab over the Arab or the white over the black or the black over the white except by *Taqwa***.” [Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad]

As for the narrations which condemn racism they are as follows.

- On the authority of Abi Malik Al Ashari (رضي الله عنه) the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said: “There are four affairs in this nation from the matters of *Jahileeyah* (Pre-Islamic ignorance) that would not be abandoned: **boasting about lineage, reviling the lineages of others**, seeking rain through the stars and wailing over the dead.” [Narrated by Imam Muslim]
- On the Authority of Abi Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) he said: the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said: “There are two qualities within the people that are disbelief¹, reviling the lineages of others and wailing over the dead.” [Narrated by Imam Ahmad]
- Likewise when Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) called Bilaal (رضي الله عنه) son of a black woman, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) told him: “**Did you insult him regarding his mother, verily you are a man with *Jahileeyah* within you².**” [Narrated by Imam Muslim]

Hence to the unbiased, open-minded reader, these Prophetic narrations, which are only six of many, clearly demonstrate that **Islam as revealed by Allah and practiced by Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) is vehemently opposed to all manifestations of racism and that the determining factor in one's status as a Muslim is knowledge, noble character and righteousness rather than one's ethnicity and colour.** For further reading regarding this matter the reader may consult a book called Prophetic Ahadeeth in Condemnation of Racism by Shaikh Abdus Salaam Al Burjis as well as Adab Al Mufrad by Imam Al Bukhari, both of which are translated into the English language.

¹Minor disbelief that can lead to major disbelief. To further explain this point, if an individual sees himself as superior or inferior due to ethnicity and believes that this is from Allah he is outside of the fold of Islam. However, boasting about one's tribe and devaluing the lineages of others without the belief that it was from Allah is minor disbelief that would not take the person out of Islam.

²Abu Dharr then went to Bilaal apologizing to him and even asking him to place his foot on his head because of the hurtful statement he made.

3. A response to the statement that Islam isn't for Africans

Built upon the premise that Islam neither gives merit to individuals based upon ethnicity nor does it doom a race of people to inferiority it must be known that Islam is a religion for all of mankind. Hence the Caucasian, the African, the Asian etc. **all have the right to worship Allah alone and follow his Messenger (صلى الله عليه و سلم) and such a privilege is not confined to a particular race or economic class.** Allah has said:

“And we have not sent you except as a mercy to the world.” [Anbiyaa:107]

Also the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said:

“I have been sent to every Black and White...” [Narrated by Ibn Sa'd]

Based upon these evidences above the perception that Islam is not for Africans is absolutely absurd and based upon no religious text whatsoever. In addition to such a statement having no premise in Islam, it also has no premise historically for the following reasons:

- There were African people mentioned in the Qur'an. From them is Luqman who a chapter of the Qur'an was named after.
- There were many African companions from them Bilaal Ibn Rabaah, Muhammad Ibn Maslamah, Mahajja', Abu Bakrah, Bareerah, Umm Ayman (who was the Prophet's foster mother) and others.
- Some of the top scholars who were students of the companions were Africans from them being 'Ata Ibn Rabaah, Nafi' who was a master reciter of Qur'an and Sa'eed Ibn Jubair.
- The Arabs never colonized Sub-Saharan Africa but rather the latter entered Islam voluntarily.
- Many of the great African empires were Muslim empires. For example in West Africa there were the Mali and Songhai empires that had rulers such as Mansa Musa and Askia Muhammad.
- Many of the prominent modern scholars are African. From them are Shaikh Amaan Al Jami, Shaikh Umar Al Fallaata and Shaikh Muhammad Adam Al Ithiopi.
- Additionally there are over 300 million Muslims in West Africa.
- Furthermore at least 15-20 percent of Africans who were stolen from Africa and brought to

the Americas were Muslim. The most active communities being in Brazil.

My dear readers, if Islam was such an Anti-Black religion then why have African Muslims among the Prophet's companions be praised by Allah, his Messenger (صلى الله عليه و سلم) and the Muslims around the world from 1400 years ago to this time? Additionally, why would most of the African continent be practicing Islam and why would many Afro- West Indians and Afro-Americans such as Malcolm X find solace and peace in Islam? It is clear to see that such erratic statements contradict history and the reality. **To deny Islam's historical role in West Africa is to deny centuries of African History which Black Nationalists themselves view with pride.** One would find them lauding the Universities of Western Africa in Timbuktu and Djenne as well as great Muslim rulers of West Africa. However, at the same time they contradict themselves by making the preposterous statement that Islam is not for African people.

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4. Addressing the roots of Arab prejudice toward Africans

From what is obvious, Islam is distant from any type of racial prejudice. However, upon reading history one cannot help to notice that racism against peoples of African descent is present in the writings of some Arab scholars beyond the second century of Islam. Although there are some who try to exploit this phenomenon it is important to clarify the following:

- The fact that this disease of racism within the Muslim Ummah (nation) still exists affirms the truthfulness of the Prophet of Islam (صلى الله عليه و سلم) when he said that this is from the main aspects of *Jahileeyah* that would remain within the Muslim. **Unfortunately, generation after generation of Muslims have taught their children allegiance to tribe, race and nation rather than allegiance to Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah.**
- When the Muslims conquered lands to the East and West they came into contact with many nations. From amongst these nations were those who had writings in social-philosophy from the Greeks and Persians. From those writers who some Muslims came to love and glorify was Aristotle and after sometime they began summarizing and explaining his works. **Aristotle himself was the father of scientific racism as he believed that some races were predestined for subjugation while others were predisposed to be masters.**
- Likewise, **the narration relayed from the Old Testament regarding the curse of Ham, who is the father of the Africans, found its way in the books of *tafseer* (explanation of the Qur'an).** In some cases some of this fabricated story became the foundation upon which Arab racist ideology toward Africans were built upon.³

Hence with **the combination of both the theory of Aristotle regarding societal hierarchy as well as that which was relayed from the Old Testament regarding the sons of Ham, this poisonous ideology of African genetic inferiority became standard among some Arab writers such as Ibn Khaldun.** Likewise, many contemporary historians have traced European ideas regarding African inferiority to the Arabs. However such a theory is farfetched.

Secondly, the Arabian trade in African people did exist as millions of people were kidnapped and

³Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal said regarding some narrations: “There are three things wherein which there are no chains of narrations, Tafseer, Maghazi (Battles) and Malahim (Battles in the future).”

forcefully migrated from East Africa, Western, Eastern and Central Europe to Arabia, Iraq, Iran and India to serve as foot soldiers in various Arab armies, as eunuchs, as domestic servants and concubines. **All scholars of jurisprudence have agreed that slave trading done in the aforementioned manner is unlawful in Islam and that the only legal means to obtain slaves was in the context of legitimate warfare.**

In addition to this point, it is important to mention that the Arabs did not only trade in Africans. Rather, **it is known by historians worldwide that they traded in Western Europeans, Eastern European, Western Asians and Persians.** Therefore, the attempt to make it seem that Arab slave trading was strictly directed toward Africans and that enslavement is a strictly African phenomenon is highly disingenuous and academically dishonest.

Therefore, although Arab racism toward Africans was and still is real⁴ **such an ideology has no foundation in Islaam** but rather it is the polar opposite to what Islam is to the point that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) himself ascribed it to *Jahileeyah* and *Kufr* (minor disbelief).

⁴To the point that some of them use 'Abd (slave) to describe African people.

5. The reasons for raising this topic to Africans

The missionaries, black nationalists and islamophobes have sinister reasons for trying to block the path of African peoples toward Islam. Firstly, because the majority of reverts to the religion of Islam in the Western Hemisphere are from the African Diaspora. Secondly, it is because missionaries wish to keep them into Christianity, Black Nationalists wish to obtain their loyalty and take their money and islamophobes wish to denigrate Islam.

The missionaries and islamophobes wish to keep those in the African Diaspora in Christianity and under the scourge of Western Capitalism and in order to do so they must make an effort to exonerate Christianity and Western Capitalist doctrine through any means necessary.

Therefore, although the papacy in the 15th century allowed the Portuguese and Spanish to enslave all Non-Christian peoples and although Africans were kidnapped, marched to the African coast, kept in prisons for months, brought unto ships wherein they were packed like sardines in a tin, kept under deck for months under the most squalid and contemptuous conditions then traded to masters who would keep them and generations after them in physical and mental slavery in order to enrich themselves, their countries and their elite, according to them the primary focus must be shifted to the Trans-Saharan⁵ Slave trade and Arab Racism.

Firstly, is very important to know that the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade didn't bring about the institutionalization of racial prejudice within the laws of Muslim countries. **The condition of enslaved Africans in Muslim countries was far better than the condition of enslaved Africans in European colonies.** The arbitrary separation of families, the forcing of homosexuality upon African men and extremely gruesome punishments, which are too graphic to mention in this treatise, were commonplace in European colonies but were nonexistent in Muslim countries.

Likewise, the legislation of racism, class immobility and second class citizenry in the United States and the colonial enclaves of Western Europe were not to be found during or after the abolition of slavery in Muslim countries.⁶ **Rather, even during the Trans-Saharan slave trade many enslaved and free Africans held high political and military positions within Arab governments and**

⁵To call it the Islamic Slave Trade is a misnomer. And this is a clear example of European colonization as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is not called the Christian Slave Trade. Therefore the reader must take note.

⁶One of the Pro-Slavery arguments I encountered in my research was that the enslaved were treated better in Europe than in Africa and Arabia because Europeans were exposed to enlightenment and Christianity! Hence, when we find statements that mention that Non-European slave trading was far more cruel it is highly likely that it is comes from the tongue of a supremacist.

armies. Therefore, unlike Western European and American slave institutions, upward mobility of enslaved as well as free Africans was a possibility.

Thirdly, this argument regarding the cruelty of the Arabs by the missionaries and islamophobes is not new.⁷ **Rather, it is one that was presented by European countries to justify their colonization of Africa over one hundred years ago.** Before what is known in history as the scramble for Africa, they comforted themselves into the perception that their entrance into Africa was to stop the Arab slave trade and cruelty as well as to spread superior culture and civilization. The result of this was that European colonists re-enslaved Africans, took their land, exploited them⁸ for their mineral and agricultural resources and made them second class citizens in their own countries.

In order to pacify the horror of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade many **Africana scholars such as Dr. Henrik Clarke and various islamophobes and missionaries have relied upon concocted statistics regarding the Trans-Saharan slave trade.** These false statistics which contain exaggerated figures were produced by the British as propaganda and as a major justification for their colonization of Africa later in the century.

Regarding such propaganda, it is impossible that the Arabs would have required such a large population of Africans (some “scholars” estimate that 90 to 100 million Africans died during the Trans-Saharan trade) in the Middle East as Africans were not required in large numbers to sustain Arab economies.⁹ **It is therefore incomprehensible as to why Arabs or anyone else would engage in such a dangerous and expensive trade in such epic proportions when such a large number of Africans were not required for labour in the Middle East.**

Additionally, as aforementioned, Arabs were involved in the enslavement of different peoples such as Western Europeans, Central Europeans, Eastern Europeans, Turks, and the Persians etc. Those enslaved from these countries were imported in large numbers and also solicited to perform the same duties as enslaved Africans. Hence, **since Africa was not the only source for slavery and those who came from outside of Africa were great in number, it is illogical to conclude that such a large amount of Africans were transported across the Trans-Saharan Slave route.**

Furthermore, although episodes of cruelty would have occurred during the Trans-Saharan trade in

⁷Rather it was exaggerated.

⁸ This is still going on.

⁹Suffice to say that an Arab plantation economy didn't exist in the first place.

Africans to say that the cruelty of Arab overlords surpassed that of European masters in the Western Hemisphere is highly dubious. However, with the guilt associated with the barbarity of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade there was and still is a necessity to copy, paste and overemphasize such exaggerations and propaganda in the interest of underlining European moral supremacy.

Hence, the reason for the missionaries and islamophobes to shift the goalposts in such a manner is not surprising. It serves to blind those in the African Diaspora as well as the general public to the reality of the Trans Atlantic Slave trade as well as African Colonization. The enrichment of Western Europe and the United States was built upon exploitation and unmitigated suffering. **Because there is blood and guilt upon the shoulders of Western powers over what many a wretched European hand put forth it is only convenient that such public feeling and conscience is directed to a softer more vulnerable target.**

As for the Black Nationalists, many of them in retrospect have fallen face first for late 19th century British propaganda and have not opened a history book properly. They have the tendency to speak about Africa while avoiding Islam which has made a great impact all across the continent. If they deny Islam's contribution to Africa they would have denied the Universities in the cities of Djenne and Timbuktu which produced Islamic scholars, Mathematicians and Scientists with their scholarship written in the Arabic language. **They would have to deny the contribution of Mansa Musa, Askia Muhammad, Uthman Dan Fodio and thousands of Ulama [Muslim Scholars], scientists, mathematicians, astronomers, poets and intellectuals who were one hundred percent Muslim and one hundred percent African.** They would have to deny the existence of some of the great Savannah and forest empires of West Africa such as the empires of Mali, Songhai, Kanem-Borno, Mandinka, Hausa and the Sokoto.

The religion of Islam, the study of the Qur'an, the study of the Arabic language and the study of different religious sciences have been an intrinsic part of the culture of West African Muslims for over one thousand years from Mali to Senegal. It is therefore incredible that those who claim to carry the banner of African consciousness and scholarship would attempt to divorce Islam from the history of West Africa and erase it completely from the minds of those from the African Diaspora.

Conclusion

From what has been presented it is clear that Islam belongs to all nations and tribes, and that to be prejudiced toward a particular race and ethnicity is Un-Islamic. Racism is a trait from ignorance and disbelief which should never be swept under the carpet in any instance. Within the Muslim communities there should be more open discussion regarding racism and from these discussions possible solutions can be put forward in order to minimize this disease. Without bringing necessary clarification it would bring about prejudice, misinformation, confusion or even in very unfortunate cases rejection of Islam in totality. .

Additionally, **it is important for the Muslims to practice Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) and his companions (رضي الله عنهم) in order to foster that spirit of love and brotherhood for the sake of Allah.** The first Muslims looked beyond colour, tribe, ethnicity and social status and for this reason Allah established them upon the earth and make them a positive example for all nations to come.

May Allah guide us and protect us.

و صلى الله على نبينا محمد و على اله و صحبه و سلم

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