

HOUSE MUSLIMS AND FIELD MUSLIMS

"Back during slavery, there were two kinds of slaves: the **house Negro** and the **field Negro**. The house Negroes, they lived in the house with master. They dressed pretty good, they ate good because they ate his food - what he left. They lived in the attic or the basement, but still they lived near the master. And they loved the master, more than the master loved himself. They would give their life to save the master's house - quicker than the master would. If the master said, "We got a good house here", the house Negro would say, "Yeah, we got a good house here." Whenever the master said 'we', he said 'we'.

That's how you can tell a house Negro.

"If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would. If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, "What's the matter, boss, we sick?" *We sick!* He identified himself with his master, more than his master identified with himself. And if you came to the house Negro and said, "Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate", the house Negro would look at you and say, "Man, you crazy. What you mean, *separate*? Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food than this?" That was that house Negro. In those days he was called a "house nigger". And that's what we call them today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here.

"This modern house Negro loves his master. He wants to live near him. He'll pay three times as much as the house is worth just to live near his master, and then brag about "I'm the only Negro out here." "I'm the only one on my job." "I'm the only one in this school." You're nothing but a house Negro. And if someone comes to you right now and says, "Let's separate", you say the same thing that the house Negro said on the plantation: "What you mean, *separate*? From America, this good **White** land? Where you going to get a better job than you get here?" I mean, this is what you say. "I ain't left nothing in Africa", that's what you say. Why, you left your *mind* in Africa."¹

From 'House Negro' to 'House Muslim'

During the so-called 'Civil Rights' era of the 1960s, Malcolm X argued that one of the ways in which a so-called 'Negro' could be identified as a 'house Negro' was through the way he or she used language, for example, by referring to the American government as 'our government' as opposed to 'the government'.

Similarly, in the contemporary era of so-called 'Human Rights', and under conditions of Racism (White Supremacy), it is possible to distinguish between 'house Muslims' and 'field Muslims'. Briefly, the former term refers to any so-called 'Muslim' who willingly submits to this system and is thereby granted 'status' and/or 'influence' among other Muslim victims² of this system by the White Supremacists (Racists). By contrast, the latter term refers to any Muslim who submits to the system of White Supremacy (Racism) unwillingly and is committed to replacing it with a system based on justice in which no person is mistreated and the person who needs help the most gets the most help.

¹ Excerpt from a transcript of the speech "Message to the Grassroots" given by Al-Hajj Malik Al-Shabazz (Malcolm X) in Harlem, NY on November 10, 1963.

² The victims of White Supremacy (Racism) are all non-white people including non-white people who are Muslims and/or those who *claim to be* Muslims, irrespective of whether they submit to this system willingly or unwillingly.

Integration and Differentiation

As with the 'house Negro', one of the ways in which 'house Muslims' can be identified is through their use of language. For example, many so-called 'leaders' of so-called 'Muslim organisations' in the UK who claim to represent the Muslim community regularly refer to the British government as 'our government' rather than '*the* government', indicating, thereby, that they self-identify with it. In addition, and relatively recently, there has been what can only be described as a concerted effort made by such organisations, as well as by certain academics and commentators within the so-called 'Muslim community', to encourage the use of terms such as 'British Muslim', 'European Muslim', 'American Muslim', 'Western Muslim' etc. The objective is two-fold: On the one hand, to further the process of Muslim integration into "wider society" by cultivating a sense of 'belonging' and fostering 'inclusion' within the nation and citizenry in order to overcome feelings of 'estrangement' and perceived 'marginalisation'; on the other hand, to promote a sense of *difference from* "the rest" of the transnational – or rather, *a-national* - 'Muslim community' (or *Ummah*): "We're British Muslims, not Pakistani Muslims or Arab Muslims."

Integration and Identity

One of the principal motivating factors behind the push for integration is neutralisation of 'radical', potentially violent, tendencies, particularly among "an alienated and disaffected Muslim youth". However, under global conditions of Racism (White Supremacy), Muslims, like all other victims of this system, are *already* fully integrated and 'included', and they already 'belong' since, like the slaves on the plantations during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, they are an *integral* part of this system.

Furthermore, under conditions of White Supremacy (Racism), differentiating oneself from other Muslims by prefixing one's use of the term 'Muslim' with the qualifier 'British', 'European', 'American', 'Western' etc, is a political act indicating a willingness to integrate into, and thereby, self-identify with this system. If the world was a level playing field, describing oneself as a 'British Muslim' (or any of the other variants) would be a "politically-innocent" act. However, under conditions of Racism (White Supremacy), its use by a so-called 'Muslim' marks that individual as a "house Muslim".

Questioning Identity

The standard view in the social sciences is that 'identity' is something that is complex, multifaceted and socially-constructed. For example, one might describe a person's identity in terms of their gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion. However, is it necessarily the case that *all* identities are socially-constructed? Could there be a kind of identity that is *given* rather than man-made? Furthermore, are all the facets that constitute an identity, or all kinds of identity, of equal significance in all contexts, or are some privileged relative to others?

Islamic Identity

The Qur'an recognises the existence of human diversity with respect to a variety of markers such as language and colour (30:22) (35:28), genealogy and tribal grouping (49:13), sex

and gender (4:3) (49:13), belief and/or 'ideology' (11:118-119) etc. On this basis, it might be argued that The Qur'an appears to lend supports to the thesis of the social sciences regarding the multifaceted nature of human identity. However, it is crucial to appreciate that The Qur'an locates the source of *these* differences in the Will of God/Allah, rather than in an independent process of social-construction. In addition, such differences are not held to have value in and of themselves; as with all 'phenomena' on the 'horizons' and in the 'self' (41:53), such markers function as signs (*ayaat*) of God/Allah. Furthermore, according to The Qur'an, these aspects of human identity are of secondary importance when compared with the primacy of the spiritual-political identity of human beings as the servants or slaves (*'ibaad*) of God/Allah (51:56), a status that is God-given as opposed to man-made.

The Politics of Naming

Naming (classification, categorisation) is a political act, that is, something which establishes relations of power (dominance and subjugation). In The Qur'an, God/Allah has explicitly stated that *He* has named (that is, classified or categorised) those who surrender or submit themselves to Him as "Muslims" (22:78). No qualifier is used and there is no indication that one is/was intended. The link between naming and power relations arises from the fact that The Qur'an names "Al-Islam" (The Self-Surrender/Submission) as the DEEN (that is, power-relation and/or life-transaction) acceptable to God/Allah. Linguistically, the word DEEN carries the following four connotations: (1) domination, (2) subjugation, (3) code of practice, and (4) recompense or requital.

When The Creator has already named (or classified) His creation, what right does the latter have to re-name/re-classify/re-categorise itself? This issue becomes all the more significant once it is recognised that The Qur'an mandates that believers have no option but to accept those matters that have been decided by God/Allah and His Messenger (33:36). Clearly, the giving of a name (classification or categorisation) is an example of such a matter. God/Allah did not refer to those who surrender or submit themselves to Him as Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims, Progressive Muslims, Traditional Muslims, Moderate Muslims, Radical Muslims, Fundamentalist Muslims, Secular Muslims, Sufi Muslims, Modern Muslims, Postmodern Muslims or by any other name. Furthermore, and even more problematically under conditions of global White Supremacy (Racism) it is important to note that God/Allah did not refer to them as 'Eastern Muslims', 'Western Muslims', 'European Muslims' or 'British Muslims' (or even as 'Black Muslims', as the White American press labelled – that is, classified - members of the so-called Nation of Islam (NOI)³).

But if the above names (classifications, categories) are invalid, then what justification is there for using the terms 'house Muslim' and 'field Muslim'? The short answer to this question is that, just as Malcolm X made use of the terms 'house Negro' and 'field Negro' to shed light on a confused situation, so too the terms 'house Muslim' (and 'field Muslim') can be used to effect some measure of clarification. At the very least, they can be used to counter the production and propagation of a compliant White Supremacist (Racist) "Islam".

'House Muslims' and 'Field Muslims'

During slavery, the 'house Negro' belonged to the house of the white slave-owner. The 'house Muslim' of today also

belongs to the house of the white slave-owner, although this 'house' is not a concrete building, but rather a political structure, a globally operating system of power relations based on colour and/or factors associated with colour: **White Supremacy (Racism)**, the dominant global system of man-made supremacy in the contemporary world.⁴

Interestingly, The Qur'an makes explicit mention of the house (*bayt*) of Pharaoh and states that Pharaoh divided the Children of Israel into different classes/castes, elevating one class/caste – what might be referred to as 'house Slaves' – and subjugating the other – what might be referred to as 'field Slaves' (28:4). What happened in Ancient Egypt (*Misr*), what happened in America on the plantations, and what is happening today are all instances of the same phenomenon: enslavement of one group of human beings by another group of human beings. It is crucial to understand this because those who today champion the calls for 'democracy' and 'freedom' are really advocating the forced enslavement of human beings to human beings. The Qur'an invites human beings to willingly enslave themselves to The One to Whom alone servitude is due: God/Allah. In this way, the 'field Muslim', that is, the Muslim who rejects White Supremacy (Racism) and commits himself or herself to replacing this unjust system with a just system *for all* (black, brown, red, yellow, and white) based on obedience to God/Allah – *Al-Islam* – enters the 'house' (*bayt*) of God/Allah wherein one is safe and secure.

Yet the physically and mentally enslaved (or colonised) 'house Muslim', like the 'house Negro' before him, is incapable of imagining the possibility of a world other than the world of White Supremacy (Racism). This leads him to "play it safe", keep his head down, and scramble for whatever he can lay his hands on within the dominant system ("Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food than this? Where you going to get a better job than you get here?"). For this reason, the 'house Muslim' willingly supports calls for 'integration' into 'wider [British, European, American=White] society', even though under conditions of White Supremacy (Racism), 'integration' means nothing other than 'assimilation', that is, absorption or incorporation, into a system of oppression. Calls for 'separation' ("Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate") are re-interpreted by the 'house Muslim' as calls for 'segregation' (with all the attendant apartheid overtones), although The Qur'an categorically states that the DEEN (that is, system of power relations) of those who believe in God/Allah and willingly enslave themselves to Him, is distinct from the DEEN of those who reject God/Allah and enslave themselves to other than Him (109:1-6). Thus, the 'house Muslim' resorts to 'sophisticated' (that is, deceitful) "language-games" in order to hide his or her subjugation to White Supremacy (Racism) and in this way, ends up, willingly or unwillingly, perpetuating the conditions of his or her own slavery, thereby blocking the route to true freedom.

Contact and Further Information

If you are interested in discussing the contents of this leaflet and various issues it raises, please contact:

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For further information on what The Qur'an has to say about Racism (White Supremacy) and other issues, please visit:

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³ The NOI did *not* refer to themselves using this term.

⁴ Linguistically speaking, a 'Muslim' is anyone who submits or surrenders to something – and that does not have to be to God/Allah. Thus, one can be a Muslim to/for White Supremacy (Racism) and, given the current global socio-political situation, this is what is meant by a 'house Muslim'.