



## **Mr. Q's Views**

# **George Floyd and Black Lives Matter: A Wake-Up Call to Minorities and Immigrants**

June 2, 2020

This letter is a wake-up call to myself and all non-Black people. I myself am a minority (son of immigrant parents). My father came to this country with a few dollars in his pocket in 1960 and worked hard to get himself a college degree. He worked several jobs, lived in public housing, started a family, and helped establish other family members so they could have a better life for themselves.

Many minorities, especially those whose parents are from overseas, might have similar stories. But these stories would not have been told if it were not for the hundreds of years of struggles and injustices our black brothers and sisters have faced (and are still facing) and fought so hard to overcome. Individuals like Fredrick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, W.E.B Du Bois, Ruby Bridges, Maya Angelou, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and millions of unknown black slaves and leaders died for justice and liberty. I recommend that we learn their names and their stories. We were not there to support them, march with them, or give them financial assistance then, but we can and should support them now!



Some of us might read this and think “we immigrants came here and have also faced our own challenges.” However, no one tried to strip us of our heritage nor our humanity. Our families were not stolen and sold from the countries from where they came. Imagine more than 300 years of not being able to attend school, more than 300 years of being tortured and killed for your skin color, more than 300 years of not being able to get jobs or build a career because of your skin color, more than 300 years of not being able to live in a specific neighborhood because of your skin color, more than 300 years of not being able to eat at the same establishment as others because of your skin color, more than 300 years of not having access to proper health care because of your skin color, more than 300 years of not receiving a fair trial because of your skin color, more than 300 years of false arrests and being detained because of your skin color, and more than 300 years without the right to vote because of your skin color.

The list goes on and on. Because of systematic racism for economic gain, Black people in this country had their leaders murdered, their neighborhoods deprived of fundamental needs and resources, and their basic rights completely violated. You would be just as frustrated and struggling to keep hope if you had to deal with the constant unending injustice that Black members of our society do. The non-Black members of our community can help first and foremost by educating ourselves and especially our kids about the history of the Black community. Our ignorance cannot be an excuse for ongoing injustices.

"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" (The last Sermon of Prophet Muhammad).

God has blessed me to meet some exceptional individuals throughout my life who helped me become the person I am today. Due to these mentors, friends, and teachers from the Black community, I would be remiss if I did not use my platform to deliver a call to justice for all Black people. Here are a few of these exceptional people who have inspired me and motivated me greatly throughout my life. I apologize to them and the entire Black Community in not doing enough for the injustices they face.



My 8th grade teacher, Mr. Earl, taught me social studies. He always dressed in a suit at school and he often played basketball with us out on the playground. He made such an impact on me that I myself became a social studies teacher. I also wear a suit to school and still play basketball.

Then there is Coach Carter, who asked me to play with the famous AAU team from The Chicago Demons (celebrating 35 years) in which I would be the first Indian on the team. The practices were held in Olivet right next to the projects of Cabrini Green. Coach Carter spoke to my father and convinced him to let me play with them. With these brothers I traveled to California, Arizona, Indiana, and several other locations for more tournaments.

In college, Mr. Stevens from student services helped the Muslim Student Association. He helped us move from a small office on the 3rd floor to a larger office on the 7th floor where his office was also located.

Mr. Crosby, a retired principal, was my professor in my Master's program. He always emphasized that we shouldn't focus only on technical skills but we should focus more on establishing a human connection. This man cared about his students so much that he would tear up when teaching us. I saw his wonderful impact on the lives of his students because of his genuine character and strong morals.

My colleague, Dr. Keith Woods, who was my roommate in a Harvard summer program ten years ago, is now the Co-Chair of the Harvard Graduate School of Education Principal advisory board. His leadership, guidance and friendship has been very impactful in my administration career

Imam Zaid Shakir read the first draft of a book I co-authored and was kind enough to write an intro to our book. His experience and support was vital for the popularity of the book.

Sister Clara Muhammed Schools who was the founder of Islamic School in America and began the important task of cultivating pride and confidence in Muslim students, while reinforcing their identity.

But alongside academics, sports were also very important to me. Muhammed Ali and Kareem Abdul Jabbar were huge role models for me and impacted me greatly in my youth. Both of them displayed pride in their faith. Both spoke for justice and equality for Black people and minorities. For the majority of my high school basketball career I hung out with mostly Black teammates who I would call my brothers. We took the CTA (buses) to all of our games from the north side, west side, and south side (of Chicago). Anyone who lives in the city understands going to various neighborhoods with various gang territories can be an experience. These brothers in certain neighborhoods looked out for me and ensured I would get on the CTA bus safely after games.

As a young Muslim it was a challenge trying to navigate the balance between faith and being American in my middle school and high school years. There is one individual who inspired me to be strong in so many ways. He is none other than Imam Siraj Wahaj, a Black imam and leader. His motivating speeches and kind and humbling personality helped me strive to keep improving myself spiritually at a time when it was difficult for me to connect with older imams from overseas.



We have all been touched, inspired, and influenced in very positive ways by countless Black members of our community from the past and in the present. I request we all show solidarity with our Black brothers and sisters regarding the injustices that are happening and that have been happening for many years. I love my country but just like our own family we sometimes have to speak out against unfair treatment or actions by a family member. Many police officers are good people, but like all of us they sometimes need to be reminded, trained, or be dealt consequences for their actions. Please take steps to help out in your local communities.

Here a few things we can all do:

1. Keep racism, stereotyping, prejudice outside of your families and homes. Many people are quick to use the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag but still foster subtle racism, stereotypes, and prejudice within their own families and circle of friends. This is not okay.
2. Donate to the NAACP, Southern Poverty Law, Believers Bailout, MuslimARC, MANA, and other national organizations to assist in their efforts for social justice.\)
3. If you live in Chicago, look into organizations like Operation Push, Project Education Plus, and similar organizations and see what you can do to support them.
4. Write a letter to your legislator and police department to have better training and build a stronger relationship with the Black community. We need to push for national

reform with citizen advisory watchdog groups having oversight over training and conduct of law enforcement.

5. Participate in a Black-led protests, following all the laws in a peaceful march.

6. Teach your kids at home about Black history and the African slave trade.

Resources to learn about Black Muslim leaders in history beyond Bilal Radiallu Anhu

include Centering Black Narrative: Black Muslim Nobles Among the Early Pious

Muslims by Imam Dawud Walid, Autobiography of Malcolm X, Servants of Allah:

African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas by Sylviane A. Diouf, and A Muslim American

Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said by Omar ibn Said and Ala Alryyes.

7. Educate yourselves about the civil rights movement. There's a great list of

Recommended reading suggested by Ustadha Zaynab Ansari:

- Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta by Mark Bauerlein
- Trouble in Mind by Leon F Litwack
- How to Be Less Stupid About Race: On Racism, White Supremacy, and the Racial Divide by Crystal Marie Fleming
- How to be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi
- Reflections on American Muslim Leadership on Trayvon Martin by Dr. Donna Auston

8. Watch movies that discuss issues of civil rights, institutional racism, and discrimination. Some movies that can help begin this thought process are: Hidden Figures, The Color Purple, Malcolm X, Amistad, Roots, Detroit, The Way they See us about the Central Park 5, Thirteen (on Netflix), Selma, Harriet, Remember the Titans, and The Jackie Robinson Story: 42.

Please note some of the content is graphic; as it tries to accurately portray the plight of African Americans during and after the era of slavery, as well as during and after the civil rights era. Parents, please be advised to check the content to determine if it is appropriate for your children and family.

9. Speak to the Black leadership in your community and ask what you can do to help.

10. Teach your kids, especially your teenagers, about their rights when speaking to law enforcement, while always remaining respectful.

11. Remind your kids to be proud of their color and heritage. No race is better than another.

12. Visit and support a Black majority Masjid.



This is the least we can do. This is no longer only about one man who could not breathe. This is about an entire Black community that cannot breathe. May God help us bring more love and understanding between all human beings. May God bring justice and tranquility in the lives of all families who have been affected by injustice.

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