

## “EXPRESSIONS OF VILLAGE VOICES”

In the 1940s, renowned poet Margaret Walker wrote a poem titled “For My People.” We share the poem by Madame Butterfly here that mirrors Mrs. Walker’s poem and serves as a continuation.

### 2021 CONTINUATION OF WALKER’S “FOR MY PEOPLE”

By Kith and Kin



Maragret Walker

For the people everywhere  
chanting their battle cries incessantly:  
their lamenting and their droning  
of their need for less brutality,  
Saying Black Lives Matter to uncaring guards,  
Who bend their knees on necks  
without a care in their hearts  
daringly exerting hateful power;  
For my people disowning their  
strength with tears  
for the gone years and the maybe  
years,

unconscious of the strength in the now years  
marching yelling canting tramping praying singing acting  
waving waiting wanting needing preaching  
dragging along  
who’s gaining? who’s reaping? who is knowing and who is  
understanding?

For our murdered brothers and sisters  
killed in the streets of America:

Miami, Oakland, New York, Brunswick,  
in their bed in Louisville, in their church in Charleston  
while jogging driving worshipping shopping  
a threat just by being Black and (who cares).

For the lost and painful times we went to work  
To earn our pay and build our schools to have our say  
to advance our people and our places  
and the generations to come,

making memories and opportunities with our martyrdom  
only to learn that bitter truth and sad reality  
that although we are Black and poor and different and hated  
violently,

we are still resilient and genius and vibrant and  
we understand our insufferable, mighty abilities.

May our boys and girls acknowledge  
their might as kings and queens  
and grow despite these things

to be as the ancestors sacrificed for them  
to be men and women, to laugh and dance and sing and  
find joy, and peace, and religion and success, to  
marry their playmates and bear children  
and know the beauty and power of unity,  
and togetherness, and doing for self.

For our people, receiving grace  
as creatures of the One Creator,  
walk soundly spreading joy,  
avoiding hatred and the evil ploy,  
make time to venerate and appreciate and celebrate  
and find strength in your magical ability

To tower with humility,  
praising the One omnisciently

Find your places in society  
and associations, and councils  
and places where you can fashion new policies,  
new laws, a better way from hate and hypocrisy  
and misunderstandings.

Fashion a world where all the faces,  
all the adams and eves and their countless generations;  
Can let a new earth rise. Let another world be born.

Let a bloody peace be written in the sky.

Let a new generation full of courage issue forth;  
let a people, all people, loving freedom come to growth.

Let the beauty of our healing and  
the belief in our strength be the clinging  
and the pulsing in our blood and our spirits.

Let the freedom works be written,  
let the lamenting lose its hold.

Let our strong progeny now rise and take control.

ABOUT MARGARET WALKER-ALEXANDER: Margaret  
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## A RETROSPECTIVE....

### IMAM W. DEEN MOHAMMED AND THE INAUGURAL INTERFAITH PRAYER SERVICE

“I considered [Imam Mohammed] the nation’s most  
underappreciated religious figure in the twentieth century....”

NOTES TAYLOR BRANCH (THE CLINTON TAPES, PG. 24)



1997 President Bill Clinton’s Inaugural Interfaith Prayer Service: Imam Mohammed presenting remarks. (C-Span)



Imam W. Deen Mohammed greeted by President Jimmy Carter during his historic White House meeting with members of the influential Black Leadership Forum. (The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum)



Following his attendance at President Carter’s January 1977 inaugural oath of office ceremony, Imam Mohammed was invited later that year to the President’s meeting with African American leaders. (The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum)



1993 President Clinton’s Inaugural Prayer Service where Imam Mohammed speaks. (C-Span)

By Irshad Abdal-Haqq

NATIONAL – The U.S. Presidential Inauguration Day occurs every four years on the 20th day of January, following the November national election. In the District of Columbia, it is observed as a major holiday. Federal offices and schools are closed, and routine traffic along the city’s downtown thoroughfares is diverted or outright prohibited.

Normally, hundreds of invited guests of the president-elect and hundreds of thousands of other attendees and spectators converge upon the numerous venues of inaugural festivities. Unfortunately, pandemic-related restrictions will likely result in far fewer events and attendees than usual for the 2021 inaugural celebration.

Reflective in time, it is noteworthy that Imam W. Deen Mohammed was an invited guest to witness Jimmy Carter’s 1977 oath of office inaugural ceremony. (See, Ghayth Nur Kashif, “W.D. Muhammad Speaks on the Future of America,” Bilalian News, Feb. 11, 1977, p. 11). And more significantly, the Imam spoke at both of Bill Clinton’s inaugurations.  
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## LET NEW YEAR 2021 BE THE YEAR OF ACTS OF KINDNESS LET'S BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO WIPE OUT RACISM, HATRED AND BIGOTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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one good seed may be tenfold to one-hundred-fold and beyond. It is never measure-for-measure.

**LET US BE A BLESSING EACH DAY; YOUR LIFE IS A LOAN FROM THE CREATOR:**

Conversely, bad deeds reap their harvests, due to Allah's Rahma (Mercy and Beneficence) as well as Allah's Far-Reaching Bounty as The Sole Provider over all cosmic creation.

Allahu Akbar! (The One G-d is The Greater!) Greater than what? Allah is Greater and More Important than anything one can imagine. None can encompass The Originator of the heavens and the earth.

Human beings are born to serve One G-d. That is our only purpose for living to obey The

One Who Created us and all creation in the cosmos.

True humans strive each day to be a blessing to as many human beings as one can, as long as one can, while one has this temporary Breath-of-Life in these physical bodies. One has a choice to be a curse or a Blessing.

Which one will you choose? No human being – male or female, man or woman, adult or child – is guaranteed to be alive at any moment, or to wake up from one's sleep. Our lives are on loan to us from The Creator, Who can call us from these physical bodies at-will.

Each and every day is a Blessing and Gift from Allah (The One G-d). Think about it.

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## STRAINS OF A PRICELESS EDUCATION

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cy of the abilities of the teaching staff.

Some teachers do not understand that students in the educational system are different in so many ways. Some are very quiet, some are very aggressive. Some students talk a lot; some do not talk at all.

Back in the day in some public school systems, some students were able to receive a good education. The teachers made sure their students were learning and understood the lessons being taught. In other words, one could view them as a ladder for the students to climb to get to the top level.

THAT alone is PRICELESS. The teachers were happy and proud to see their students succeed, because they understood that education is a lifelong process, unlike many of the public school teachers of today who are all about the paycheck! Many of the teachers nowadays do not truly care about their students.

It was in Pre-Kindergarten that the parents of Ahmed Ali were blessed to find an institution which had staff who would begin a meaningful academic journey for him. He was an example of a student who moved from a public school to the Clara Muhammad School of Masjid Khalifah, which has had a drastic impact on his life. When he was in public school, Ahmed had such a negative experience in his class with

the teacher and his classmates.

Often, he was isolated and left alone, which did not help his educational growth and development. His dad was left with uncertainty as to what to do with him.

After careful thought, he then remembered the Clara Muhammad School of Masjid Khalifah, which had once educated his oldest daughter several years prior. At CMS, students are given the opportunity to set goals for themselves and then, work towards those goals.

Ahmed Ali's dad explains, "When I brought my son to Principal Darlene Bashir, she welcomed him with open arms, and that is when Ahmed truly began his educational growth and development.

"From the very first day, Ahmed has been treated with love, care, and nurturing hands. The teachers all work collectively to address my son's needs without any reservations. It was indeed a PRICELESS education he received.

"I knew he would receive an excellent education to the highest level because of the outstanding leadership of Principal Bashir. The great collaboration between leadership and staff makes CMS such a special learning institution.

"With all of the hard work, it led my son, Ahmed, to earn a Certificate of Achievement

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## MUSLIM JOURNAL A RETROSPECTIVE....

### Imam W. Deen Mohammed and the Inaugural Interfaith Prayer Service

*"I considered [Imam Mohammed] the nation's most underappreciated religious figure in the twentieth century,"*  
NOTES TAYLOR BRANCH (THE CLINTON TAPES, PG. 24)

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ral interfaith events.

In addition to the formal oath of office or "swearing-in" ceremony that highlights the day at high noon, Inauguration Day usually begins with one or two more solemn events. The president-elect and his/her family may choose to first attend a private religious service at their preferred house of worship, followed by a public interfaith national prayer service. Bill Clinton chose to host and attend only the latter for both of his inaugurations.

Thus, several hours before the iconic parade along Pennsylvania Avenue from the inaugural platform to the White House, President-elect Bill Clinton, Vice President-elect Al Gore, their families, prospective cabinet officials, trusted advisors, and special guests gathered for an interfaith Presidential National Prayer Service for the first time at a Black church – the historic and renowned Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Washington.

It is there that Frederick Douglass delivered many of his lectures, including his last major speech, "The Lesson of the Hour." Funerals for Douglass, Rosa Parks, and other prominent public servants also were held at Metropolitan AME.

Typically, the prayer service consists of representatives from various faith traditions sharing their spiritual insight and offering prayers for the wellbeing of the nation and the president-elect's leadership, among

other things.

Until 1993, when Bill Clinton's inaugural committee invited Imam Mohammed to participate, the Islamic tradition had never been included at such an event. So the Imam's participation was, indeed, a historic moment in American history.

It was during this interfaith event that Taylor Branch, the acclaimed and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, said he was pleasantly surprised by Imam Mohammed's involvement.

Upon his reelection in 1997, President Clinton's inaugural committee again included Imam Mohammed in the interfaith prayer service. Yet at the time of this writing, the Wikipedia page on presidential inaugural prayer activities curiously omits both of President Clinton's interfaith prayer services, thereby effectively concealing the Imam's historic participation and contributions.

But by Allah's Grace, the record of both Clinton interfaith prayer services have been preserved by C-Span and are viewable online. (The 1993 service can be accessed at: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?37247-1/inaugural-interfaith-church-service>. The 1997 service at: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?78109-1/inaugural-interfaith-prayer-service>.)

During the 1993 service, Imam Mohammed recited from Qur'an Surah 5:69, Al Ma'idah – The Repast, fol-

lowed by commentary on Prophet Muhammed's (pbuh) Farewell Sermon regarding racial equality. He concluded with a reading from Qur'an Surah 49:13, Al Hujurat – The Chambers, regarding the purpose of humanity's diversity.

During the 1997 service, the Imam recited in English and Arabic from Qur'an Surah 2:177; Al Baqarah – The Heifer, expounding upon the true measurements of righteousness beyond complying with rituals.

As he spoke, the Clinton and Gore families, as well as other observers, are seen in the video giving their unwavering attention to the Imam, as if soaking in the comforting wisdom of a revered sage.

Following each of those interfaith prayer services, the president-elect and dignitaries proceeded to the inaugural platform on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol – the side of the building facing the National Mall. There a separate invocation (prayer) was delivered for both Clinton swearing-in ceremonies by the late Rev. Billy Graham.

As a community service that is part of an ongoing indexing project, a transcript of Imam Mohammed's inaugural prayer service presentations are posted in Irshad's Blog, which is linked from Abdal-Haqq.com. There, you will find references, notes, and comments on this topic in an effort to promote an accurate record of our Muslim American community's contributions in establishing Al-Islam in America.

## Be Like Malcolm!



**AL HAJJ MALIK AL  
SHABAZZ**

began the Muhammad  
Speaks newspaper  
for the  
**NATION OF ISLAM**  
and put emphasis on  
maintaining a  
**SUPPORTIVE FREE PRESS.**