

Minaret of Freedom Institute 4th Annual Dinner
[Heavily Edited Transcript]

Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad: We turn to the essence of the issue that the Minaret of freedom is all about: the issue of liberty. Our subject tonight is the importance of liberty to Muslims. Liberty is one of the most important things to all human beings anywhere, including Muslims. Tonight, you will be hearing from one man who has suffered a loss of personal liberty for four years because of his commitment to the liberty of his own people in Algeria, and another man who did something almost beyond imagination—who gave up an enormous amount of personal power in order to help bring about the liberty of people in his own country. Liberty is something that is in the Qur’an, and our dear brother Nasr Al-Asi, you were all appreciating his recitation of the Qur’an. I want to repeat the translation of the second verse he used in tonight’s invocation: again because it’s so important. “Let there be no coercion in religion. Whoever believes in God and rejects evil, has grasped the trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things.”

It’s important to understand that from the Muslim point of view, when we say “no coercion in religion,” religion in the Arabic word here is “*ad-dîn*”. *Ad-dîn* doesn’t just mean matters of ritual. For the Muslim, *ad-dîn* is a way of life. So when we say no coercion in religion, we mean no coercion in the Muslim way of life. So, liberty is at the heart of the Islamic conception of justice.

I really want to give credit to all the other Muslim organizations who are here, not just because of their support for us tonight—for which we are very grateful, but because of the role on which they have collectively embarked in the fight against secret evidence in this country: the American Muslim Council, the American Muslim foundation, SUCCESS, CAIR, the American Muslim Zakat Foundation, the Peace and Justice Foundation, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought. Each organization has a slightly different emphasis, and working together we have been able to change the perceptions of Muslims in this country and the way Muslims operate to make them more effective *in sha Allah*. We’ve got a long way to go. We all know that.

[Applause]

Ali Abuzakouk: Thank you, Imad. As-Salamu Alaikum. This meeting is an honor for me. To stand here, in front of you, to introduce to you a man who represents the struggle of his family against the Draconian unconstitutional practice of our legal system. We Muslims know that in the end, nothing happens but what Allah has ordained us. Yet, we struggle to make life better for all of us. The Minaret of Freedom Institute annual dinner champions the struggle of American Muslims and all Americans who believe in liberty and justice for all. In addition to the Muslim organizations Imad named, the National Committee to Protect Political Freedom has stood by our side to fight, and to defeat secret evidence and to also get the freedom of our imprisoned brothers like Anwar Haddam, Mazen An-Najjar, Nasr Ahmad, and others.

This is just a prelude, now I think you need to hear from Dr. Anwar Haddam. Let me give you a few words about Anwar Haddam: friend, family man and a man who worked in his country of Algeria to bring about an awareness of the faith. That country gave us a million in a half murders for the independence to liberate it from the colonial repression of the French, the so-called leaders of the revolution of Europe. He was elected in 1991 in the first and the last free elections in Algeria and he was posted to become first speaker of the first freely elected parliament in Algeria. But those who did not like democracy in a Muslim country, in Algeria, made the coup d'état that put thousands and thousands and thousands of people in the desert, in concentration camps. Those who were able, led the captive to carry on their struggle, and one of them was Anwar Haddam. Anwar became the president of the FIS parliamentarians in exile to bring about an awareness to the world over about the plight of his people. They participated in Rome declaration to bring about peace and justice to Algeria, as did almost 90% of the Algerian political parties and organizations. Yet, the government driven by the army refused to accept the solution and continued the path that has led to more than 150,000 dead persons there. Investigations to date have not been fruitful or permissible.

Anwar was educated in physics and he was the lecturer at the University of Algeria. He was the founding member and the executive committee member of the Islamic Association for Civilization and renewal. That organization was based on the same paradigm as put forward by the famous world-known Algerian philosopher Malik An-Nabi, for which Anwar, since he led Algeria, has become the spokesman. He spoke about the Algerian situation in the world over, in Europe and in the United States. In the early days of the 90's the American Muslim Council worked with him. He was a dignified visitor of the state department in those days. When the policy makers changed their direction in 1996, he was taken from his home as if he was a criminal and he stood with the criminals in American jails, four years and one day. It is appropriate here to say that his wife Nasima Haddam became the leader of his family, of his fortune. She has to struggle to keep them in this country and to keep their study and to keep them really under high spirits. She deserves to be applauded especially because our sisters sometimes do not get the rightful recognition.

(Applause)

I ask Anwar Haddam to come and address our subject.

Anwar Haddam: As-Salamu Alaikum. Thank you very much, brother, it was too much, really. *Bism Allah, al-hamdullilah, wa salaatu wa salaamu ala rasuul-illah.* [The speaker praises God and bears witness to His Unity and the prophethood of Muhammad, (peace and blessings be upon him).] Indeed all the praise be to the One to whom all dignity, honor and glory are due, the Unique with perfect attributes *Allah subhâna wa ta'âla*, who begets not, nor is he begotten, who has no equal, the Almighty, the Omnipotent. He sent his messengers and his prophets to guide humanity toward what we call *tawhîd* in the Islamic language. That is the Islamic invocation toward liberty and toward freedom. *Tawhîd* or Monotheism as understood in Islam, belief in the oneness of

God, means for us Muslims, believing in the oneness of the lordship of Allah, of God : There is no lord we obey but Allah: *Al Hakimiyatu lillah*. *Tawhid* means in the same time, for us Muslims, believing in the oneness of the worship of Allah: There is no one to be worshiped but Allah. *Tawhid* means also believing in the oneness of the names and attributes of Allah, the ones that He described Himself with in the *Quran*, our Holy Book revealed by Allah to our Prophet *Muhammed* peace be upon him and on all prophets of God. Indeed, believing in the Tawhid of Allah means for us Muslims we free ourselves from anyone, with whatever might he/she might have on this earth. That's why for us, Islam is the religion of liberty, the religion of freedom. The prophets and the messengers were sent to liberate mankind from the enslavement, of one toward another, to freedom , from the worship of so many false deities to the worship of only one God, to be servants of God, Allah. So I give all the praise to Allah. Who gives us liberty and freedom. *Al-hamdullilah adhîm, la iqraqha fi'îin, qadtabyana rushdu minalghai*. Let there be no compulsion in religion. The truth stands out clear from error. We in Islam accept no compulsion whatsoever. That is the religion of *tawhîd*, the religion of freedom.

When I saw this name Minaret of Freedom, I thought those are very well chosen words. Yet, we have a long way to overcome what has been a huge campaign of disinformation against Islam and against Muslims, far from the origin, the essence of Islam. Indeed, we Muslims have to change ourselves. Yes, others have orchestrated a campaign of disinformation against Islam, but we, as individuals as well as a community, are in part responsible of that campaign. The Muslim Community has to review its agenda, to review its activities, in order to change that negative perception of Islam, to conduct itself according to the real essence, to the real meaning of Islam.

Allah has sent his prophet and messenger to guide humanity toward *tawhîd*, the original freedom of liberty, and also to warn them of the consequences of *shirk*, or polytheism, or above all, associating partners with Allah, partners that spread oppression, injustice, genocide, tyranny, despotism, etc. We were blessed with by Allah as human beings with our ability to be able to choose freely. Our free will has a responsibility it carries with it. With a free will, a free choice and liberty, there is a responsibility.

Peace and blessing upon all the prophets and messengers, especially the last one, Muhammad ibn Abdullah. I would like first to thank Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad and all those involved in the Minaret of Freedom Institute for inviting me to share some thoughts about such an important topic: the importance of freedom and dignity to all Muslims. Dear brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, this educational policy research institute, the Minaret of Freedom Institute needs and deserves the support of all the people, especially financial support. It depends completely on your donations. We Muslims really need such a think tank to educate, to do academic research, serious academic papers, to educate the policy makers, the media, the public at large on the Islamic issues and perspectives which are of interest not only to the Muslim community in the United States, but to the whole Muslim world. What makes this magnificent Minaret of Freedom Institute unique and deserving your support is its emphasis on liberty while addressing the issues of democracy and the free market. By supporting this institute you are really showing everyone the real meaning of liberty and freedom for mankind and for our

Muslim struggle for self-determination and development. Freedom is indeed the most important factor as to whether the free market economy benefits our people here in this country and around the world or whether development will only benefit certain parts of the population at the expense of the rest, and actually serves the old colonial order in a new form, depriving our people of liberty.

We are living in the shaping of the New World Order. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of the cold war, East and West are now together, shaping a new world order. Unfortunately, the Muslim world is not part of that shaping. That's because of the huge problems that we are facing in the Muslim world due to our inability to resolve the crisis of political authority in our countries, despite the tremendous human as well as natural resources that Allah blessed us with. The Muslim world is seen as just a field of vital resources. The people of the Muslim world have no human rights at all. Muslims all over the Muslim world are being deprived of their basic human right to choose freely because of the lack of freedom, the lack of dignity. Unless Muslims realize this, unless they overcome this deprivation, the new world order and the world market economy will become in reality a new form of colonialism, a new form of exploitation of our vital popular resources. In this struggle is the importance of institutes like the Minaret of Freedom.

The discussion within the Muslim community should be focused on both the domestic issues and the international issues. We are one *ummah* whether we like it or not. Whatever is going on there (in our Muslim World) is going to affect us here (in the US). And whatever affects here in this Muslim community will affect the whole Muslim *ummah*. The American Muslim Community must understand that, in the perspective of a New World Order, it is blessed to be here in the United States, the only existing superpower. That is so for many reasons: the socio-economic status of the United States; the political system; freedom and liberty that one enjoys in this country; also the United States has no colonial history with the Muslim world as Europeans have, etc.... One can name many reasons why the Muslim Community in the U.S., despite all the hardship that it is going through, found itself in a strategic position that, if well appreciated and used effectively, the Community could contribute, in a significant manner, to World peace, stability and economic prosperity. The Muslim community in the U.S. must take seriously its responsibility towards the Muslim *Ummah* and toward this country. The Muslim Community needs to organize itself in order to be able to fulfill its duty, to contribute in shaping the politico-socio-economic decisions made in this country to the benefit to the United States as to the benefit of the Muslim world.

We need to wake up; we need to realize the importance of our freedom, our liberty in order to accomplish such an agenda. The issue of the use, of the so-called "secret evidence" against mainly Muslim activists in this country, has arisen because there are some people who are not happy with the growth of the Muslim community and its potential in this country. They have a hidden anti-Islamic agenda. We should not waste our time and resources in blaming them. They are doing what they think is their job. What are we doing as Muslims? We have to wake up, and we have to seek how to handle this situation.

We have come a long way, *al-hamdullilah* on this issue of “secret evidence”. Just last week we had the introduction of the repeal of the secret evidence in Congress. The secret evidence provision was created to scare Muslims from exercising their rights in this country, in order to deprive the Muslim community from its development and the development of its institutions. And also to scare them from participating in the shaping of the American foreign policy towards the Muslim world to have more freedom, more democracy, and human rights for Muslim populations.

For Muslim populations around the world, the main issue is the issue of the right to freedom, the right to liberty. Liberty in the Muslim world is of crucial importance. As it is well established in the political economy of international relations, the nature and scope of a country’s participation in the world’s free-market economy are greatly affected by the decisions taking within its borders. We have to understand that the market is not actually politically neutral. Indeed, the economic interdependence created by the free market economy establishes power relationships among groups and societies, at the international level as well as the domestic level. It is only legitimate and dignified that Muslims call for freedom to choose freely their country’s political authority in order to assure the benefits from this free market economy benefit for every sector of the population and not just selected elites.

We are doing our part in the Muslim world, but we need you the American Muslim community to strengthen your institutions, by continuing the struggle for freedom and for liberty, the liberty to Be American Muslims, liberty to have American Muslim institutions, liberty to have your say in the development of American policies, especially those of concern to the Muslim world.

I’ve been almost twenty years in this country in and out, and I still hear about Muslim communities having the same problem how to finance and to establish Muslim organizations. We have not yet reached that economic independence. A really serious job should not rely on donations. We should secure our financial independence, because only those who have economic power could have a say in policies and the decision making. That is what is happening at the international level. The rich and powerful countries influence the political decisions, the social decisions, the cultural decisions in the economically weak ones. The same thing happens here. The richest group will try to influence the cultural and religious decisions of the poorest group in the society. This should not happen. That’s why those who have an anti-Islamic agenda are trying to continue a campaign of disinformation against the Muslims in order to prevent them from striving, from working for their own economic independence, for their right to their freedom, to their basic human rights.

I think the time has come for the Muslim organizations to sit together and to review their agenda, to review what is the mission of the organizations? How can we benefit from our Muslim community? And can how the Muslim Community benefit these organizations? Let us take the example of “Minaret of Freedom Institute” : Each and everyone understand the real importance of liberty and freedom. Each and everyone would like to

have the right to freedom, the freedom of belief, freedom of religion, the freedom that Allah gave us. And yet only few are those who are helping this organization. We should not always blame the others. We should think about ourselves. Let us start by helping “Minaret of Freedom”: Helping it means that we really seek Liberty that will provide us with what we call the ability to flourish, to develop.... It will give the Muslim community the ability to participate for the benefit of the American society at large.

We know what’s happening in the American society. Everyone is complaining about the social sickness that is going on, even at the highest political level. The lack of moral leadership is amazing when an elected official has been caught in such immoral situation in the open and will still be rated high in the polls. This is a shame. The Muslims, and the people faith in general, they should think about setting a coalition among them. We as Muslims, as people of faith, we can bring the moral dimension to the political arena. People of faith and Muslims in particular should support organizations such as the “Minaret of Freedom Institute” and the great job it is doing in trying to educate, not only about liberty and freedom, but also about Islam and its values, about the basic human rights in Islam: freedom of belief, of religion, of conscience, and of association, the right to privacy—including freedom from surveillance, the right to work with no discrimination, the right to participation and involvement in public affairs, the right to equal treatment under the law without discrimination, and the right to justice for all.

I urge each and every individual and organization for the sake of their own activities, they should support such a think tank, The Minaret of Freedom Institute. The people of this Institute are dedicated to educate people, policy makers, what Islam is all about. This is in the best interest of the United States, the Muslim World and the World Community at large, *in-sha Allah Wassalamu Alaikum*.

[Applause]

Ahmad: Thank you very much, brother. I appreciate that very much. As soon as our next speakers finished we can have questions for both of the speakers since their subject is the same. Now I want to segue by noting something that brother Anwar said. He said we should not be forced to give up our identity in order to be accepted in this society. This draws us directly to the history of our next speaker. He was the son of Elijah Muhammad, the honorable Elijah Muhammad who founded of the Nation of Islam, and who made it his mission to wake up people in this country who still have the slave mentality. He did it the only way he knew how: to turn everything that they believed upside down in order to destroy that old and faulty belief system and pave the way—though I don’t think he really was doing this, but as you know as the Christians say, God works in mysterious ways. He paved the way so his son could come along, a young man, a man who is a scholar who studied the religion very deeply.

For Elijah Muhammad, Islam was a sense of identity. You had to know who you were before you know what you should do. I’ve thought a lot about this. Perhaps you remember the ending of the movie of Malcolm X. They had this scene where Nelson Mandela is speaking: “As Brother Malcolm said, ‘We declare our right on this earth, to

be a man, to be a human being, to be given the rights of a human being, to be respected as a human being, in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence—“ and then it cuts to Malcolm X saying, “by any means necessary.” Before you can demand someone respect your rights as a human being you must recognize his identity as a human being. Once Elijah Muhammad had established to his people, and so many of the African-Americans in this country, that they are all human beings—black *men* and *women*, then the way is ready for Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, a scholar, to say what does it mean to be a Muslim? What is it that God wants us to do and how do we go about doing it?

Now let me tell you a little bit about Imam Warith Deen’s education. It’s another issue that’s very dear to our hearts, and *in sha Allah* we’re going to have an education conference sometime and try to get enough co-sponsors so we can afford to do it. Warith Deen Muhammad was educated at the high-school level at the University of Islam. But he received his basic training in reading, writing and arithmetic and how to think for himself from his mother Clara Muhammad, who, I guess, took the principles that she learned from that experience and knew established the Clara Muhammad school system that so many as Muslim-Americans are going to now. Being able to learn how to read and write and do arithmetic and to think for yourself is the most important step in becoming a self-motivated, self-actualized human being, which is what Islam is about. As brother Anwar said earlier: in Islam there’s only one God; we are all directly responsible to that one God. He made us thinking beings. Warith Deen Muhammad took that approach. While his father was alive, he respected his father, he did not interfere with what his father was doing; but his father also respected him, because he turned over the Nation of Islam to him. The Nation of Islam was a very highly centralized organization. Warith Deen turned it into an association of free and independent men and women—small business men and women for the most part. He let the masjids control themselves—let the local masjid here in Washington elect its own Imam instead of having one appointed for them—and established the principles of liberty on a day-to-day basis for so many people. So, he’s a really appropriate speaker to talk about this subject.

I was instructed, strictly, that I’m not to flatter Warith Deen Muhammad in my introduction, so I’m just telling you in the facts. Anybody who knows me, knows that I don’t flatter anyone. It is a fact that I have the greatest respect and admiration for anyone who can devolve so much power from themselves. Lord Acton said, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” To find someone who was more interested in having the people that he is spiritual leader of to realize their destiny as human beings as the servants of God rather than to make personal power to himself is an amazing thing. Warith Deen went on to self-study, to become an expert, not only in Islam, but in Christianity. He is an expert on interfaith affairs. He is now a spiritual leader, not just of any particular racial group, but the premier spiritual leader of Muslims in America. Imam, I’m not flattering you when I say, without fear of contradiction, that it is my pleasure to introduce Imam W. Dean Muhammad.

[Applause]

Warith Deen Mohammed: As-Salamu Alaikum. [After praising Allah and testifying to his Oneness and blessing the Prophet saws] Distinguished brothers and sisters, it is an honor that you have invited me to be a speaker here this evening at your 4th annual dinner for the Minaret of Freedom Institute. When I heard of your organization, I felt so good. It was such a relief and such a boost of energy to my system. I thank you for existing here in America. And I believe if you just remain patient, in time you are going to get much support from the ummah here in America. Much support. I pledge my support to you and all that I can do to help you, just let me know and it will be coming: (Allah willing).

I want to say a few words to you on this subject, but first I want to let you know that you are very, very important to our future in this country. America is people – human beings. They believe in being kind toward other human beings, despite what we see in the behavior of this society. I think that behavior is also due to freedom. It's a freedom that's misunderstood by too many Americans. I have studied the history of this democracy, how it started with the writers of the establishment of the constitution, the introductions to the constitution. I have studied it and I see the freedom that this country was established upon is not the freedom we understand in our public life as Americans. It's quite different. I think that if you are given just a little help from the many of us who are in America, you will be able to address both our liberty and also the liberty of American people, not to make anyone suspect you in the affairs of the republic, because, we are in America, and we are American citizens.

It should be expected that if we present our perception of man and the freedom God gave him, we should also address the same idea that this country gave us and that the people of this country cherish and hold very dear. You came at a time that we really need to be looking at what is a human person. What is the individual's freedom? You are much more educated than I am in language, so I can speak directly to you and be very brief on my understandings of the Qur'an and the life of Muhammad the Prophet, prayers and peace be upon him. Freedom for us is two freedoms, two paths. We devote ourselves to the freedom of the ummah and also to the freedom of the individual. The free individual wants his community free if he is to enjoy his freedom. Our freedom really is simple for me; it's very easy to understand.

The freedom of human beings that God created is the freedom of Adam, the first human being, our father, peace be upon him and thank Allah, God most high, forever, and forever with thanks, repeated thanks for Muhammad through whom God gave the picture of Father Adam in the Heavens—in the Heavens! Lifted back up into the Heavens to show us that our father was an honorable creature. And God says that He has certainly honored every descendent of Adam.

And what freedom did God give Adam? He gave Adam the freedom to think on his own. And that was so frightening for the angels. They said, what would you do? What is this you're doing? There's going to be bloodshed. And God says, wait until I have given him of my own spirit [chuckles] then make your assessment to him. That freedom that God gave man is the freedom that we have in the history of Western thought.

That freedom began with a free thinker. To believers, Allah says repeatedly in the Qur'an that man is a creature created to think. But not thinking without a purpose: Thought and reflection for a purpose. This is the right of human beings, and I believe if we can see the closeness of our idea of the honor that God gave man- man's freedom- if we can see it's closeness to the American idea, we can speak to them more convincingly and bring them to at least respect us more and feel comfortable with us as their neighbors in this United States of America. That's all I wanted to say to you tonight. Thank you for this great honor. Peace be upon you.

[Applause]

Ahmad: We're going to have a moment for taking questions. While you're thinking of your first question, I'll make a comment myself on something that Anwar had said. Perhaps some of you didn't follow the importance of having freedom domestically in order to have freedom internationally. This is something Montesquieu pointed out. He said that normally free trade among countries is a good thing. He said there was one case in which it wasn't a good thing: If within a country you have an elite that is manipulating the economy for its own benefit, you're actually better off without the free trade, because the elites are going to manipulate the trade within the country for their own benefit to the harm of the people who live in the country.

Ihhan Calgri: My question is for Dr. Anwar. I was just wondering whether he found from his experience in prison an interest in conversion to Islam among others there.

Haddam: Clearly, I had to spend some time with I would say the worst criminals you might have in this country. As I came to understand the situation, I say most of them come from a broken home. They have problems with their own families. If we sit down with them they will respect people of faith—I'm not saying that only because I'm Muslim, because I've seen them also with that same reaction with people of other faiths, to be honest with you—. Some of them become Muslims because in our religion we practice. We practice five times a day in prayer. We are really close to our religion. That really makes them respect us more, as Muslims, because they were missing faith in practice in their lives. Also, I think that we should review the prison system here as a whole. People might make mistake in their life; they should not be punished forever. People change; they really do change. The system should be open to accept those criminals who have changed back into society. I think that is a basic human right. We have this in the Islamic jurisprudence. People are allowed to go back even with the worst crime that a human being could make, according to Islam, i.e. to associate partners with God. Allah will accept their repentance when they become Muslim. So how about lesser crimes committed by minorities that are really, they are having a very hard time in the inner cities. We should focus more on this. I don't think to be tough on crime means to put more people behind bars. To be tough on crime is to review our education system, what's going on TV, what's going on the streets, etc..., not to put more people behind bars because of their economic situation. *Allahu a`lam.*

Abuzakouk: My question is to our guest Imam W. Deen Mohammad. I know the good work you have done for the community, but we do need the work of your community in the fight against secret evidence, which affects all Americans. You represent the Muslim American Society—your community, and with your guidance we could galvanize that side of our community. I would like to entertain this, how we can work together. The repeal of secret evidence was introduced in the House just last week. We'd like you tell us, how we can work together, *in sha Allah*.

Ahmad: The question is, how can the multiple Muslim communities, especially the Muslim-American Society to get together to fight the secret evidence?

Mohammed: We are one community; we know that. We live in the same country under the same government. That should make it very clear for us that we need to work together. We should work for the benefit of society in America, and that's each one of our responsibility, whether we are black or white or any color. For each one of us, that is our responsibility. Our responsibility is to work toward advancement of our society, and our ummah in America. If we can really come together for that purpose, then the concern that you have would be addressed in that context. The big context to me is much more important than the issue that you've mentioned. But also the issue that you have mentioned is extremely important.

Now, I'm on the record for speaking to Muslims that are not black or African-Americans, and on different occasions expressing my desire to see us work for our children and grandchildren, and their grandchildren's future in America. We don't have a lot to offer. We don't have a big professional class in our community like you do—although recently it's really exciting to see how fast professionals are drawn to us, and we thank Allah for that. It is this religion, this Qur'an, and it's Muhammad's model that's bringing it about. It's this religion making us big, pushing us to want to be bigger and bigger and better and better. So I'm on the record saying that if we want to work out our future together, the obligation on each and every one of us is the same.

And I've suggested something regarding business. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad took people, 90% of them, who didn't have a year's college education. His appeal was to, the uneducated who didn't know too much about this system, and didn't care to. They were looking at how they were treated and they wanted a way out of it. Elijah Muhammad offered them a way out of it. He said, separate from this wickedness in the White world, and build a nation of your own.

They followed him into that. I was born when my father had already accepted that. Elijah Muhammad had made an effort, and to poor people it was an impressive effort. The system couldn't accept that some group of people in the centers want to build wealth. So they had planned that. Yes, you can build wealth, but when the leader dies, we are going to take that wealth in the name of our laws. And that's what the courts did. They took it from us. They charged us with tax violations and co-mingling of monies, etc. and they began to take everything. They used the children of the leader. They got us through the probate court and finished us.

My father saw that coming long before that happened. He told his staff and his family we will lose all of this. He was talking about our material growth. He said but, you'll get it again. We will get it again. That's what my father said. Many of the followers, they don't hear that. All they hear is they don't have money. Many of them who had heard my father say these things charged me with loosing the wealth of the Nation of Islam [laughs]. I wasn't responsible for what they lost in the courts. It was taken away from us. In my opinion, it wasn't fair, the way some of this money was taken away. But I was responsible for a changed spirit and a changed principle regarding how much pressure to put on an individual. You can put pressure on an individual that will cause him to loose his wife. An individual loses his house, or his apartment, he is brought down from social honor in the face of his children and his wife, because you put a quota on him. He had to give so much to the temple, to the Nation of Islam. He had to sell a quota of papers. Even is he were a doctor, a professional man, he had to sell that quota. Nobody in particular failed. Now we have the Qur'an and we have Islam from Muhammad the prophet. We don't have to fail anymore, and we won't fail. Now again, we are making an effort to better our material life, to better the business in our community, and Allah is with us. We are going to be successful. Be patient, and we're going to be successful. I've invited the immigrant Muslim community: Do you buy fish? We do too. We can buy fish together. The more volume we buy, the lower the price, and there are so many other things we can do to help or support all Muslims.

For some reason, you're not coming my way. I keep coming your way, but you are not coming my way. Well, we still have faith in you. Believers are supposed to believe in God and Muhammad and also believe in each other. I still have faith in you, and I'm still waiting. I got some good news last week from some of you. We can work together to better our material life in this country. Believe me, land is power. And what comes out of the land is power, and what you sell that comes from the land is power. And it's political power. It is social status. So that's where we should start.

Elijah Muhammad said we have to go back to the land. Well my father went all the way on that. He said we should believe man is God, and we have got away from that. So we want to get together and we will get together. I would like to see someone represent this interest in every major city of these United States. Connect us with someone representing this interest from your side. Yes sir. Thank you.

[Applause]

Ninie Sayarkin: I'd like to present three questions to Dr. Anwar Haddam: Is there a parallel between the cancellation of victory of the Islamic Salvation Front by the military in Algeria and the cancellation of the victory of the National League of Democracy in Burma? How were you treated in prison? And now that you have political asylum, do you think you will go back to Algeria?.

Haddam: First off I'll start with the last question. Although the highest body of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) did

grant me asylum, some quarters within the Immigration Service are still trying to revoke that decision. My file is now at the office of the Attorney General. The previous Attorney General did not have the courage to settle the issue once and for all. We're hoping that the new attorney general will do so, because, as I said at the beginning, all that matters for me is my liberty, my freedom of movement. Of course, I wish to stay here, but what I value most is my freedom to pursue my legitimate political activities for the sake of my people. As far as going back to my country, of course I will, because it is my country, and as an elected representative in Parliament I have a moral duty toward my people. I will never give up my people. And I hope that my family, even though they are American born, they grew up here, they are in college and I hope that they will not forget their people, *in sha Allah*.

As far as what happened in prison, I was treated as a criminal and put with criminals, even though that is against American law. If the INS people need to arrest asylum seekers—even though they have no legal claim to do so—they have to put us in a proper detention center, but they did not. I had some cell mates accused of murder within prison. They were brought in with us, but *al-hamdulillah*, Allah saved us. I would make sure that in Islamic society we would NOT have such a prison system. It is really degrading; it is inhumane, immoral to have such a prison system. People might make mistakes, but they are human beings and should be treated as human beings at all time. It is only by treating them as human beings that you can expect them to come back to society as human beings. I'd like to say that the oldest immigrant (verses the new immigrant Muslims—we are all immigrants in this country, besides the native ones) have done great job in building institutions for this country. But the prison system needs to be changed. We should study how to overturn these laws that allow such prisons. It should not happen in the United States.

As far as the first question, it is a political question and I liked it very much. What happened in Burma and what happened in Algeria happened at the same time. Yet, look at the reaction of the world. People are supporting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the elected leader of Burma, by even giving her a Nobel peace prize and by condemning the coup d'état in Burma. The political partners of Algeria—especially French at the time and, since '95-'96, the American government—have supported the coup d'état in Algeria claiming that it was the only way to put an end to Islamism. What does that mean? As if Islamism is a threat? As if trying to enable the people in the Muslim world to establish a state that will establish a Muslim ethical social order is a threat to the West. I don't see the threat to the West unless it is a threat to the over-exploitation of our natural resources, the vital resources. If that's what they mean, yes we are a threat. We will not accept any more over-exploitation of our natural resources. We in the Muslim world do not want to keep to those vital resources that Allah blessed us with for ourselves, but we would like a share. Algeria was the first gas producer in the world, and now you see people eating from garbage. The coup d'état was made in the name of saving democracy, so the putschists claimed. We are still in a civil war in the name of saving democracy. Those who put an end to the electoral process, they betrayed democracy in the name of saving democracy. Look what's happened now. Perhaps the time has come to make an assessment of what happened. Yes, it is unfortunate that the West is having this double

standard, but this is our job as political activists in the Muslim world, and this is your job in the Muslim-American society, you the Muslim community to make the American society at large and the decision making people to be aware of the situation in Algeria. As I said before, because of the history of the United States we don't have, *al-hamdulillah*, this past history of colonialism between the United States and the Muslim world. Therefore we could have rich and fruitful cooperation between the Muslim world and the United States that we would have not been able to do so with the Europeans. We in the Muslim world, we are ready to forgive—but not to forget—what happened in the past, but those in power and their allies in the West do not accept our call for self-determination. It is very important for this community to put an end to the double standard that is going on. For non-Muslims, they accept the right to self determination, freedom fighting, even—this was amazing for me—they received Gerry Adams in the White House while I, elected representative of my people, was put in jail. I was almost a victim of one of the IRA bombings in London . We, in the Muslim community, in the Algerian community, we have always condemned all types of terrorism, because it's against our belief. Yet we have been accused of many things and put in jail, and those who support terrorism have been accepted in the White House. The new and old immigrants must get together, to straighten out the institutions here and end the double standard.

Ahmad: We're taking one more question. Yes, in the back.

Unidentified Man: This question is to Imam Warith Deen Mohammad. Last year we saw a picture of you and Louis Farrakhan on the cover of a magazine. I'm just wondering to what extent has Mr. Farrakhan come closer to mainstream Islam and what their doing now.

Mohammad: Maybe five years ago or more we noticed that Minister Farrakhan was either giving instructions to his leaders under him, or without having himself directly connected, he was permitting his leaders, his ministers to go to other Muslim groups to learn how to pray and to study Arabic from them. And he permitted them also to come to what was seen as a rival—that's the group that's with me. He was letting them come to our centers to learn how to do salat and how to read Qur'an in Arabic, Qur'anic Arabic. And that hasn't stopped. That's still going on right now. We have a pretty good relationship with many of his ministers who are in the same situation that we are. They attend some of our meetings of this nature. They are sitting among us and sometimes they will give in charity. I think that I can say the situation is good. It's good for us coming closer and closer together. We can come their way too for economic empowerment, for social reform, and many other freedoms. But we must come the same way for religion. We think the future looks good.

Now, I have to say in past years Minister Farrakhan has not been consistent. He would make a strong announcement saying that he's on the right way and he believes in just what all the other Muslims of the international ummah believe. Under financial pressure to pay the bills, he goes back, he reverts back to what he would say before. I believe it was to keep those people with him, supporting him. I believe as long as he's getting

financial help outside his poor congregation – because his national congregation is poor – he’s okay. But when the money is not coming from outside his organization, he feels that to get support he has to go back to the old teachings. On the one hand, I want to tell us here we don’t have what it takes. But on the other hand, I say let’s work for the future.