

# Udskrift af interview med Khalid Yasin i Det, Muslimer Taler Om

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## Podcast-titel

Khalid Yasin: Malcolm X, The Da'wah & Islam relevancy

## Podcast-beskrivelse

Sheikh Khalid Yasin er en amerikansk muslim, som har dedikeret mere end 40 år af sit liv til at sprede islams budskab og nedbryde fordomme om islam og muslimer. Han har givet taler i mere end 130 lande og er inspireret af sit personlige bekendtskab med bl.a. Malcolm X og Muhammed Ali. Vi taler om Dawah, oplysning om islam, hvordan det har ændret sig over generationer, fitnah, eller splittelse, i oplysningen om islam, og hvorvidt islam stadig er relevant i det 21. århundrede.

Gæst: Khalid Yasin, sheikh, life coach og aktivist.

Værter: Asiya Ahmed og Elias Ramadan.

Tilrettelægger: Sara El-Khatib.

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Ahmed: Bismillah, you are listening to the Muslim Conversation, a radio program by Danish Muslims in mainstream Danish radio. My name is Asiya Ahmed.

Ramadan: And my name is Elias Ramadan. We are very honored to be joined by Sheikh Khalid Yasin for today's conversation. Sheikh Khalid, Assalamu alaikum and welcome.

Yasin: Wa alaikum salam.

Ramadan: Sheikh Khalid is a well-known Muslim preacher, inspiring life coach and activist, most known for his dedicated work the last 30 to 40 years to remove distortions and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. He has delivered lectures in more than 89 countries. Sheikh Khalid, you converted to Islam in 1965. Am I right?

Yasin: That's correct.

Ramadan: It's the same year where Malcolm X, rahimahullah, was killed.

Yasin: That's correct.

Ramadan: Was it before or after the event?

Yasin: No, I met Al-Hajj Munish Shabazz, ghafarallahu lahu, I met him briefly in January of 1965. And a month later he was assassinated, February 25th. And I became Muslim in October of the same year.

Ahmed: How was that meeting?

Yasin: It was electrifying. But, you know, I was a young guy, an admirer. It was very cold. We were up on the roof because there was no room in the streets. And his security told us to come down from the roof. We came down and, you know, he called us and we went over and we shook his hand. It

was just freezing cold that day. But it was memorable. I never thought it was going to be historical. But, yeah, so to meet a legend, you know, at that time. And everybody was touched by Malcolm. Muslims, non-Muslims. And, again, Malcolm didn't know his own magnitude. That's probably what kept him humble. And so we ask Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala that, you know, those of us who are in that shadow, that we remain humble and we can achieve something.

Ramadan: The public person, like we see from speeches and I think for many people watching Malcolm X, they have the image of Denzel Washington from the movie. How was he in person?

Yasin: No, Malcolm was very humble. It's just like people confuse Muhammad Ali. They look at his ring figure. But he wasn't that. He was a father. He was a husband. He was a very mild-mannered guy, reclusive. I'm talking about Muhammad Ali. Reclusive. Very intelligent. But a lot of what he said in the media, he said it for the hype, you know, for the money, for the fight. But that wasn't him. It was a very deep thinker, a gentleman. And I had the chance to make hajj with him twice, so I know him. So people get confused with the media profile. Malcolm was very disciplined, very focused. He didn't pay attention to the outside. That was probably maybe his nemesis. He didn't pay attention to the outside dynamics. He was focused on what he was focused on. And he said: I saw that at the end of the doorway that I'm going to be assassinated. I saw that. He says, I'm a dead man walking.

Ramadan: Malcolm X?

Yasin: He said that. I'm a dead man walking. But when you know that you have options, most people would take the options. He didn't take the option.

Ramadan: What was the option?

Yasin: Well, the option is that he could have done other things. He could have modified the opposition. He could have protected himself. He could have insulated his message. He could have been more theoretical, philosophical, all of that. But no, Malcolm decided that his fate was written and that he was just going to walk it out. And he did. And regardless of whether his wife or his children agree or disagree, it is what it is. And his legacy is what it is.

And there's not a library – there's not a public library in the world that doesn't have his biography. There's not a state house, a state leader – and I've been in at least 17 state houses – and there's no one that has been in any office in the world that hasn't read about Malcolm. So, he never completed the eighth grade. So, what a lot of people wrote and what people think and opinions doesn't mean that much as what has happened.

Ramadan: Why do you think he chose to walk the walk instead of protecting himself?

Yasin: Well, he just thought that his message was already couched in a set of dynamics that dictated the times. The conspirators, he knew three or four of them. He also knew the challenges that was in front of him. And Malcolm wasn't a worldly person. You know, that he did not plan out five years or ten years where I want to be at. He didn't see himself sitting behind a desk or he didn't see himself. He felt that the hand of God had already written that he was supposed to do something and he just decided to continue that route. That's what I think.

Ramadan: When we're talking about the global Dawah scene and the way Islamic preachers have preached Dawah, what do you think has changed?

Yasin: Well, let's try to understand the phenomena of Dawah in terms of the use of the word. And I'm going to be perfectly honest without being critical of anybody.

Ahmed: Please.

Yasin: The word Dawah in terms of the public, it has kind of like two sides. One side is associated with Sheikh Ahmed Deedat, ghafarallahu lahu. And I'm one of his students. You know, I spent – I had the honor to spend three months with him in Durban, you know, where we got directly from him some of his techniques and all of that. So that's one side of it. And I would probably say that that's probably the most dominant side that we see today. People who are students of Sheikh Ahmed Deedat, like Dr. Zakir Naik and other people.

And then there's another side of Dawah, which is which is part of the Saudi phenomena. That is the Saudi scholars. And I'm not doing this with any implication or anything, indictment or nothing. The Saudi scholars took the classical concepts of Dawah, presenting it. They put it into forms and pamphlets and booklets. And they had the money to be able to produce the literary side of Dawah. And we can just say that 80 or 90 percent of all the books in all the masjids and all the libraries, you know, the really nice colored books and the glossy books and all that. They've been Saudi-ized. That means they were produced in Saudi Arabia by the Dar-us-Salaam group and all of that there. And Saudi Arabia spent a tremendous amount of money investing in this kind of Dawah. And whether you want to say that they have an agenda or not, that's not important. It's just that that's where the investment came from. Now, these are the two prominent sides of the Dawah.

And then another that came in was the Hizb ut-Tahrir, the brothers who were the followers of the legacy of uhhh the Sheikh ... Uhh...

Ramadan: Taqi al-Din.

Yasin: Taqi al-Din... Uhh...

Ramadan: Nabhani.

Yasin: Nabhani, ghafarallahu lahu, one of my heroes. So then this came in and these were the pragmatists. These were the arguers. These were the guys who evaluated. These are the ones who peeled the potatoes or peeled the onion or whatever you want to call it. These guys had a different approach to Dawah and they had an impact. Unfortunately, their Dawah style was kind of like intrusive, argumentative, with a lot of polarization, a lot of dialectical arguments and all of that.

So if you take these three sides: Sheikh Ahmed Deedat. The Saudi phenomena with the Aqidah and all that and their preachers and teachers. You take the Hizb ut-Tahrir and then there's another one, which was the Jamaat Islami of Abul A'la Maududi. So if you take that along with the Ikhwan al-Muslimin to a certain degree, what happened in the West was sort of like a mixture of these five phenomena. Now, that's like three generations ago.

Ahmed: Yes, so that's been dominant for those three?

Yasin: That's correct. So now what's evolving – and I think I'm part of that new evolution – is more critical thinking that is more relevant to the constitutional values of the countries where we are preaching and teaching. Because if your Dawah, your delivery, your presentation of Islam is not consistent with, sensitive to, relevant to the constitutional and social values of the country where you're at, then you are out of bounds. You're out of touch. You know, you got your own agenda, your own perception and all your nostalgia and all your dialogue and all the stuff that goes with it. But no one's going to listen to that foolishness because it just – it's like somebody who wants to put salt in their coffee. That doesn't go with it. We're living in the cappuccino age. So even, you know, regular coffee, nobody's drinking regular coffee anymore. So you have to move with the flow.

Secondly, if your Dawah, your religious values or perceptions, doesn't bring benefit to the society, what are you talking about? I mean, do you just have your own package you just want to deliver to people? You just want to get your own thing off or something like that? Then, OK, do that. But so what? Whoop-de-doo. The whole thing is that in the society where you're at, you want to be received. You don't just want to be heard. You want to be received. You want to be embraced. You want to be appreciated. Well, that takes something a little bit different. I mean, you've got to study the constitution, the history, the social values. You got to be tolerant with people. You have to be clever. You have to be personable. And you have to be genuine. Like the guys that get girls say: You got to keep it real. And people can smell it out in the first five minutes if you're not keeping it real. You know, you got some kind of persona that's really not you. You're just quoting somebody else. The real intellectuals and the real thinkers, they're going to smell it out. And that's kind of like what's happening now.

Ahmed: Do you feel like that we are doing this, you know, being in the context and taking the context into consideration when preaching and doing dharma? Do you feel like we are getting more accepted, or?

Yasin: Well, let me – maybe I need to answer that in a special way. You know, in Dawah, we say that giving Dawah has its own liabilities. And if you are going to keep it real, then you got to know the battlefield that you're on. You know, because if you don't know the battlefield that you're on, that means you're not going to be equipped. And if you're not equipped, then you're going to be a victim. OK, so let me take a couple of examples here. Here, I think one of the primary voices that needs to be heard and appreciated is Dr. Said Ramadan. OK, and you see what happened. I'm not talking – I'm not making any judgments. I'm just saying you can see what happened. So the people who plot and plan – our opposition, OK? – they're not stupid. So when they can see a very effective voice, then their aim is to do what? It is to kind of like deflect. Or to maybe put it off balance. OK, so it's like playing chess.

You know, so the thing is – that voice, his thinking, that critical thinking where you take the politics, you take the social values, you take the demographics. You take the history, you take the sensitive issues and you start to approach them from a very surgical point of view. This is the kind of mind that you need to have. If you're talking about Dawah in Europe, Dawah in the Western world, Dawah in Australia.

This traditional arguing of ideas – like, what is done in Speaker's Corner – this is like Baboon Dawah, *[inaudible]* guys who's doing that. You know, I'm saying what I call Baboon Dawah is like – do baboons argue with intellectuals? No, they don't. They might be appreciated. It might be a zoological phenomenon or something like that. But nobody's going to really appreciate that. So guys who's coming with their own cultural persona, guys have got their own ideological persona, and they just come to Speaker's Corner and where people are insulting each other and people are just undermining each other and people are demonstrating their own thing. This is not an atmosphere of Dawah. In fact, I think that it demeans and undermines. OK, Dawah in a sense.

And who's doing that? Not older, mature intellectuals. It's like young guys who are ambitious – and I'm not putting, again, any indictment upon them. But you can see where it winds up at. It winds up nothing. On YouTube, getting likes and shares and people becoming YouTube celebrities. If that's what people call Dawah. Sorry, guys. That's not classical Dawah. Dawah is calling people with intelligence.

Ahmed: So what I'm hearing you say is that, you know, some things have changed for the better and some things have changed for the worse when it comes to Dawah.

Yasin: Exactly.

Ramadan: And Speaker's Corner, what we're referring to is in London where they have, I think it's once a week, where people from all walks of life, different political backgrounds, religious backgrounds and so on meet and they have some – you see they have discussions. Many times it's heated.

Yasin: Well, if you want to call it discussions, you can call it that. They're cursing, they're arguing, they're insulting. I mean, it's just a hodgepodge. It's just like a crazy environment that if you just want to go in there, it's like – I think it's kind of like, you know, it's like you put on the gloves and you go inside the ring and, you know, everybody claps and everybody says this and the Muslims say takbir and the Christians say Hallelujah. And other people say this and that. But what is the outcome? Nobody ever knows what's the real outcome. And so in Dawah, there has to be some defining terms. There has to be some kind of an outcome. There has to be an objective in mind. And somebody looking can see how it started, the involvement on the ground and how it ended. You know, it's like a football game where there's no scores. What's the aim of it?

So I commend the young guys who are engaged in that because they've made a commitment. They're doing their best. But are they using the right tools or using the right methodology – in Europe? I say no. We have to have a better way. It's got to be well thought out. And we've got to think about the issues, the challenges, the obstacles and think about how we're going to package it. And we don't want to create damage. We're not trying to just win and damage people and insult people. We're looking at the best way to present Islamic values with the Western values and have people to associate. Then we win. We both win. And I think that Dawah is a win-win. Not like I take all, you take all, type of... No, it's not like that.

Ahmed: What do you hope will change in this whole global Dawah scene? Do you wish for something to change?

Yasin: Well, actually, sister Asiya, it is changing. It's changing while we – It's just like what we're doing right now. You know, technology has impacted the world and we're not going back. Where technology has brought us, we are not going back. It has been archived. People will remember. But it's not going backwards. It's going forwards. And either we're going to be a part of what the future is unveiling for us or we're going to remain as – like people is just part of nostalgia. You know, talking about this and talking about that and remember this and remember that and kalalahu subhanahu wa ta'ala and flexing on people our Arabic and idioms and all that.

But the issue is: Are we addressing problems? Yes, we are, because – this is one of the first programs I've been on, by the way, where we sat together first and we discussed: What do we want to talk about? Why do we want to talk about it? And where do we want to get to? So that says that you guys are mature. You're young, but you're mature. See, other people are young and immature and you can see the coffee is all over the place. You know, you don't say so. The other people who are old, they're stuck in their ways and they're talking about issues that really is not going to change anything.

So for me, it's we're involved in change. And what I try to be is as an OG – that we call in America – what I try to be as an OG is I try to listen to my grandchildren, not just talk to them, but I try to listen to them, observe them, see what kind of tools that they are using.

And if you don't mind, I want to just give you a personal little story here. I was in America and myself and my granddaughter and her grandmother. We went to Applebee's. It's a restaurant. And we were sitting there at Applebee's having lunch. And so my granddaughter, she says to me, she says, Jadd, you've got to keep in touch more. You know, we don't hear from you that much. So I said to her, yes, sweetheart, I'm sorry. You know, sometimes when you're overseas and all that, you can't call because the calls are too expensive. You know what I mean? So she says to me, Jaddi, you don't know what's up. So I said, yeah, I know what's up. She said, Jaddi, I didn't say 'what's up', I said 'WhatsApp'! I said, what is that? Oh, man. She just laughed. You know, we call it clowning. Right. Yeah. She clowning me. She said, oh, you don't know WhatsApp. Jaddi, give me your phone. So I gave her my phone. She downloaded WhatsApp. I've been using it ever since. Now, this was my granddaughter who introduced me to WhatsApp. Because she says to me, Jaddi, you don't have to pay for international calls anymore.

So if all the people are not in touch with the third generation going down, you're just out of touch. You just lost it. That's it. You sit and sit in the window in your chair and watch the world go by. So I thank Allah that I've been in touch and I am in touch. And I thank you guys for inviting me here. And I hope that I do somewhat of a job that's expected.

Ramadan: Have you ever felt that you lost touch?

Yasin: No.

Ramadan: Always stayed in touch?

Yasin: Yes.

Ramadan: The energy also stays the same, mashallah.

Yasin: You know, I think energy is just a gift from Allah. I mean, God gives more of it to some than to others. And so if there's a gift that God gave me and I think it's my DNA, both my mother and father, they were very active people, very physical people, very electric people. And so I think I took that part. My mother just passed away about a year ago. And even at 99 years old, she was electric. She was the center of everything. And so I thank Allah for that. So, no, I've never been out of touch. And maybe my grandchildren and my great grandchildren will be the ones that probably could answer that better.

Ramadan: How old did your mom become?

Yasin: Yes, my mother. My mother died as a Muslim.

Ramadan: How old was she?

Yasin: She was 99.

Ramadan: 99 years old. And how old was she when – I remember she didn't convert immediately after.

Yasin: Actually, my mother converted in 1982. We were at the airport. I was going for Hajj and she took shahada there with my wife at that time, Hajjah Nadia. But for some reason, while I was gone, my sisters took her back to the church and all that. But she kept the values.

Ahmed: Mashallah.

Yasin: And every time we were together, she prayed with me and all of that. But she officially took shahada again. I had a Somali wife who used to wash her feet and comb her hair and put her in the jacuzzi. And she just had such a wonderful chemistry with Amina that one day I came back home, and she's sitting in the chair with hijab on and she's taking – she's saying the shahada! So it comes from behavior. It's not just the words; it's behavior. So, yes, my mother was – Allah blessed her to be a Muslimah and about 50 people followed her at her funeral. And she was buried across the street from the mosque. That was a gift that Allah gave to her. So I'm very grateful for that. And so I think if I was in touch with my mother and I'm in touch with my grandchildren, I kind of think that's being in touch.

Ramadan: Definitely.

Ahmed: And we pray that Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) continues to give you that energy. Mashallah. It really is inspiring.

Ramadan: May he unite you with your mother and with us as well. Sheikh, I want to ask you about something you said about how some people – they have this nostalgia, so they stay stuck in some time or some methodology. And I think on the opposite extreme, you have people who goes too fast with every new innovation they follow. And there is this debate over the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam), whether he was someone who always conserved – he was a conservative – or someone who always progressed. How do we find this balance? And how was that emanated in the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)?

Yasin: You know, wahi is something that Allah gives to prophets. And so the prophets have the benefit that they are they are being guided by wahi. So it's almost like a vehicle that's being controlled. OK, but there was just a human side of the Prophet, so I'll say that the wahi plays its part, but the Prophet is still a human being. He's thinking as a human being. He's feeling as a human being.

And, you know, there is a Hadith of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) that I think kind of expresses it to a certain degree. Some of the scholars of Hadith, they classified this Hadith as being weak or whatever, but it doesn't contradict any of the Hadith. It doesn't contradict the Quran. He says, Al-Mu'min Qayisun Fatan. Now, the people who are Arabs know the terminology. Qayisun Fatan. Qayis means the believer is clever. Smart. You can't fool him. Fatan means that he's personable. He can see into things. Qayisun Fatan.

Now, I think this demonstrates for us that our Dawah, our personality, our views, our interaction with people – we have to be personable. We have to be insightful. We have to be sensitive. We have to be personable with people. We have to be well liked by people, not necessarily popular with people, but people have to respect our values because of the way we act. And if you act in a certain way that people respect, that becomes the foundation for what you say. Nobody's going to drink from a toilet, even if it says toilet, spring water. OK, nobody's going to drink from the toilet.

So if you don't have a good personality, if you're not a personable person, if you're not a person that's neat, if you're not neat and you're not clean, if you don't arrange things well, you know – even if you don't do color combination well. You know, one day the Prophet was given a gift and it was a red cape. So, you know, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) didn't wear red. It was just too loud. You know, that wasn't his personality. But because it was a gift, see what he did. He put it on and he prayed in it. And after he prayed, he gave it away. He said he'd give it to Omar. So then Omar said, ja rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam, why do you give it to me if you don't want it? The Prophet told him to give it to a slave or your servant or something like that. So what does it mean? Just because

he didn't like it – it's not befitting of a prophet – it doesn't mean it would not benefit somebody else. And another thing is, if it was given to him as a gift, see how he honored the gift.

So if you look at the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)'s life, he was very balanced. He said about food: We are a people that do not eat until we are hungry and we don't continue eating until we're full. Subhanallah. That is the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) in his behaviors. People loved him. They loved to be around him. Nobody wanted to leave him. And even his enemies left the money that they entrusted with him. They left it with him while they're fighting him! Now, who's going to do that? So I think that we have to look at the life of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) –

Ahmed: Sallallahu alaihi wasallam.

Yasin: - and see how he acted. When I say his personal actions or interactions we have to look at that, because there's the wisdom of the Dawah right there. And so I think that in answering your questions, if there's some things that we need to polish, we need to polish our image. And we have to distinguish. We have to make sure that our image is consistent with Islam, because in many cases people get confused between the two.

It's like Islamophobia. You know, to be honest, I don't see as much Islamophobia as there is Muslim-phobia. People are afraid of Muslims and maybe rightly so. I mean, I'm not going to say if – because the Prophet said [*Arabic phrase*]. But I can imagine that many non-Muslims, because of looking at Muslims – interacting with Muslims – they don't want to have nothing to do with Islam.

So then our job becomes to separate the two: Islam as a civilization. Islam as a set of values. Islam as a way of life. Separate that which is all good and all powerful and appealing and powerful in every sense of the word. And then Muslims in their backwardness, Muslims in their social reaction, Muslims who are stuck in the past, Muslims in their tribes and their cultures and their ethnicity and their problems and their psychosis and their social dysfunction and all the kinds of things that I have seen.

At the same token, I'm a Muslim and the Muslim ummah – I'm in the Muslim ummah, and the Muslim ummah is me. But we got to be critical of ourselves. I tell the brothers, pull up your fly. Or something's going to be hanging out. Hey, sisters, don't just put on the outside hijab. You know what I'm saying? You got your booty all out. Come on, sis. Get your act together!

So we have got to put things into perspective and don't confuse people by our persona as Muslims and what Islam demands. And the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: You are not a Muslim if you don't bring your hawa into accordance with what I brought – your hawa, what is that? Your feeling, your emotion, your opinion, you know, your persona – with what I brought. What does he bring? The Quran and his Sunnah.

So all of us have to learn over a period of time through humility, through examples and just through good advice to get our act together. And getting your act together means that you need to be in tune with the society that you're in and not just a society that you came from. You need to be in tune with Islam and not what you think Islam should be. And we have a tremendous responsibility and Allah is going to ask us about that on the Day of Judgment, the responsibility and the opportunities that we have in the West to represent Islam.

Ramadan: Elaborating on the conversation about the global Dawah, what would you see as the greatest fitnah we have in Dawah, or on the Dawah scene as they call it today?



Yasin: OK, let me be – I'll be intellectual at the end. I'll just start out with some graphics. First of all, we need to subordinate the culture. I tell the brothers and sisters: Tone down the culture. I don't care your culture, my culture, homeboy culture, Arab culture, African culture, Asian culture. Man, tone the culture down! The deen recognizes and appreciates everybody's culture, but the culture is not on top. Islam is not in the vehicle of your culture or mine. No, we're in the vehicle of Islam. You know, if you've got a cake, you put in chocolate, chocolate, chocolate. You can't taste the cake no more. The chocolate becomes what? Dominant. This is what has happened with Islam. The culture has become dominant. Everywhere you see Islam discussed, it's really culture.

Ramadan: Is it like people who put too much sugar? So you have to ask them: Is it tea with sugar or sugar with tea?

Yasin: Yes, is it tea with sugar or sugar with tea. That's correct. You see, that's good. So the issue is we got to balance out the culture and we have to subordinate the culture. I mean, literally subordinate the culture because you don't subordinate the culture. Culture is always trying to pronounce itself. And then you've got the killer instinct inside the culture. Muslims are killing more Muslims today than non-Muslims are killing Muslims. Muslim governments are imprisoning more scholars today, OK, than there are being imprisoned by non-Muslims. OK. And so-called Muslim intellectuals, Muslim personalities, Muslim governments are doing more damages, and it's a greater antithesis to Islam, than the Islamophobes. So, I mean, that's a phenomena that I've come to understand.

And this is not an indictment. I'm not pointing fingers. I'm not complaining. I'm not saying anything. I'm just saying that we have to step back for a moment and see, OK, what mistakes we have made and that we are contributing to and take ourselves out of the – what do you call that? The algorithm – take ourselves out of the equation of the problems, because sometimes the people that talk the loudest and are the most reactionary, they're the problem! And we don't want to be the problem. We want to be at least a part of the solution. We want to be able to at least be part of the proposition.

Ramadan: What's the intellectual answer for that question?

Yasin: The intellectual answer is that we have to look at the world. And the world means micro-macro. Now, looking out from the world, I'm micro. Looking into the world, whoever can see that, that's macro. We've got to get both. We've got to get both visions. And with technology today, we can see both visions. And if you want to understand what our message should be, we have to look at the micro-macro. Whoever's not doing that is one-sided. We're not going to say they're wrong; it's just one-sided.

You know, there's a hadith of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and I'll just kind of like summarize it. The Prophet said that when he went on the miraj, Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala took him out of the atmosphere of the earth and he saw the earth from outer space. He said he saw the earth as a miniature. That means what they're seeing, what NASA is showing us from outer space, the Prophet saw it on al-isra wal miraj. He saw what was going to go in it and what was going to come out of it. And he says the time would come when this message of Islam would enter every house, OK, and every home, every heart and every home, regardless of what fabric it was made from. So this is a prediction of the Prophet. And because Allah lets him see what? He lets him see it from a macro point of view. Although when he went back, he was looking from the micro point of view.

So I think today we have to look at the world, not us, not our problems, not our subjective situation, not where we are on the Google map. OK, we need to look at the whole globe. That means you've got to study. You've got to be wide minded. You've got to be objective, not subjective. And then

you've got to set goals. OK. And you've got to be influential. Now, for me, influence is the main word. OK, because Microsoft is probably the most influential tool or entity in the world today when it comes to technology, because they came out first. Now, there are other people who are powerful, but they're not going to outstretch Microsoft because Microsoft did it 10 years before others. And they planned out 30 years before others start planning. So, I mean, not because I'm an American. It's just that that's just what it is. So now it just so happens because of that technology, the five or 10 top IT companies in the world are where? They come from where?

Ramadan: The US.

Yasin: The US. OK. Out of 179 transnational corporations in the world – sorry, guys – 110 come from the US. So the US definitely has global vision. Now, is it on demise when it comes to some other issues? Yeah. Every civilization comes to a demise. It has its infancy. It has its adolescence. It has its full grown and it has its old age and it has its demise according to Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddimah. So America is definitely on a decline and the West is on a decline. Now, who's going to fill that decline? Well, that's maybe another conversation. But those of us who want to give Dawah from a global perspective, we need to understand the sociological, political, demographic dynamics that are taking place in the world today. And if we can get that part of it, then our Dawah is going to be much more effective in the world. I think.

Ramadan: We mentioned that you have been Muslim since 1965 mashallah. How has the time from 1965 all the way up to 9-11 and post 9-11? The Muslim, the American Muslim mindset, how has that been changed throughout these years?

Yasin: That's a very powerful question. Let me see how I can answer that. Well, I'm going to use myself as an example rather than giving other people as examples. You know, I came into Islam. I took Shahada from a gentleman of Allah. His name was Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal. Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal, he and his wife, mother Khadija, I think they were both from Caribbean background. And they were both musicians. I think that he was a violinist and she was an opera singer, something like that.

So, you know, think about this: In 1945 is when they entered Islam. They set up the Islamic Mission of America in Brooklyn, New York at 143 State Street in 1945. So they were wealthy because they belonged to the Philharmonic Orchestra. So they had money. So when they retired they brought six brownstones. And at that time a brownstone probably cost maybe around 50,000, 100,000. Today those same brownstones are being sold for 1.5 million in that area of Brooklyn. You can go there right now and see for yourself. Just a brownstone building with maybe four floors, you know what I'm saying? 1.5, 2 million dollars. Well, they bought six. In one of them they established the Islamic Mission of America. That's where I took Shahada October 5, 1965. OK.

There was a gentleman there, a Pakistani gentleman. His name was Hafid Makbul Ilahi. Qari sahib, they called him. Well, he became my first teacher in Quran. I performed Hajj twice with him.

I joined the Jamaat Tabligh with him. So I went to Raiwind. I did my chilla there. I traveled from Karachi all the way over to what is now Bangladesh, which was at that time – I forgot the main city of Bangladesh – Dhaka. So I went from I went all the way from Karachi all the way over to Dhaka. I traveled across Pakistan. And to do that from West Pakistan, East Pakistan, you gotta cross through India. So I did that whole trek. And so I was sort of like Asian-ized, Pakistani-ized, Indian-ized. I mean, the whole thing. But I appreciate that. And that's a part of my legacy that I – when I look back on it – It helped me to grow. OK.

Then after that, I became part of the Jamaat Islam. Abul A'la Maududi. So I went from the Jamaat Tabligh to Abul A'la Maududi. I went from Abul A'la Maududi and reading 17 or 20 of his books. And also I visited him in his house in Islamabad.

And then from there I joined the Ikhwan Muslimin. And so I joined Ikhwan Muslimin, reading the books of Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, may Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) bless all of them. OK, so I read their books. I associated with them. I read the Fiqh us-Sunnah by Sayyid Sabiq. And I had some teachers in that regard.

And then I moved from that point into another movement. It was the Dar-ul-Islam movement, which was organic to the United States of America.

The Dar-ul-Islam movement was a movement which set out basically to take the Quran and the Sunnah for new Muslims and establish the presence of a social political state in the United States. That was our idea long before the Hizb ut-Tahrir came along.

And then after that, Mashallah, he blessed me to come in contact with the classic Islamic knowledge. I went to the University of Medina. I stayed there for about 18 months. But just for personal reasons, I'll call it. I just couldn't – I couldn't stay there the amount of time that I really wanted to stay there. So I didn't get what other brothers got who stayed there for four years, eight years, 12 years, 20 years.

Like Abu Amin Bilal Philips, Mashallah, one of my heroes. You know, he may not be a very close friend, but he's one of my heroes because this is a guy who wrote 17, 18, 19 books or maybe 27 books. He wrote himself with his own hand. He articulated in the English language. So that's not a scholar, what's a scholar? So I'm saying that to say that you can see by Dr. Bilal Philips, you can see the growth right there. I'm using him as an example. If by 1990, Dr. Abdul Hakim Quick and Dr. Bilal Philips and Dr. Zaid Shakir – you can see what those three of those people did. This means that we transcended from followers to leaders. From people who were just reading and students to high-level intellectuals. So this is among the 3.5 million African-American reverts in the United States today. That's our legacy.

Then I moved on from that and I kind of like joined the Salafist movement. Now, I was never part of the Dawah-tu-Salafiyyah. I was never part of it. You know, I mean, the whole phenomena of guys arguing and cutting off their pants and, you know, condemning other people and saying other people was this and that. I was never part of that. But the Dawah-tu-Salafiyyah in terms of the aqidah, in terms of the classical information and knowledge, I had a chance to sit with scholars, read from those books. My teacher in Mecca, Sheikh Khalid Al-Halawani, other great scholars of that magnitude. I was able to draw something from them.

It brought me then to around 20 years ago where I started to become sort of like not a totally free thinker, but a free thinker in the sense that like I'm an American, I'm an African-American, I'm a social activist. So I can't put myself in anybody's social, political, historical, ideological cup. I've gotta take all that stuff and bring it forward and start becoming responsible as a senior thinker for my own thinking and also for my own legacy.

So that 20 years sort of like I started talking more and you can see my lectures in 2001, 2002, 2005. I came out with a series of lectures that was filmed by a group called One Islam. May Allah bless those brothers. You know, I say that: May Allah bless them – may Allah bless them – for what they did in terms of perpetuating my ideas and all that. The fact that we wound up with a not so good contractual relationship. We can just leave that alone for right now. But Allah bless them to open up

a door to my thinking around 2002, 2003. And that's the social media, YouTube phenomena that most people are familiar with.

Unfortunately, about 15 years ago, I did a crossover and I think I talked about that in the beginning. And I did a crossover and the African-American Muslims – Muslimun judud – this is the classification in the Sharia – Muslimun judud, new Muslims. This is our phenomena right now. We're at a crossroads. Are we going to continue to follow the trajectory that was already shaped for us? Or are we going to take command of our own trajectory? And that is inherit the responsibility – a tremendous responsibility – of constitutional values that America has more than any other place in the world – and use that for the benefit of the Islamic message? Or are we going to take the Asian, African, Arab phenomena? And I mean, that would also include the Bosnian or the Turkish or the – whatever other contributions that's being made – for us as Muslims we have to take that, use it as a spice in our tea and on our food. But we gotta cook our own food. We gotta set our own agenda.

Ramadan: It's the American pie.

Yasin: And take our place at the table. And we have to have our share of influence. As Allah Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala said to us in the Quran, he says, Allah Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala, he mentioned to us in the Quran, you see, that we have to – it is our responsibility to take the path towards the akhirah. The classic issues relevant to our akhirah. Our iman, our ibadah, our aqidah, and all the things that are classical in terms of our knowledge and all that. But we also have to do what? Wala tansa naseebaka mina alddunya. But we also have to take our share of the dunya. And share doesn't mean a piece of pie. Share means a share of the responsibility. So that means, it got nothing to do with being a Democrat or a Republican or being a liberal or all of that there. No, it means being on the playing field of the modern world. And if you're on the playing field of the modern world, you got a share of responsibility. And part of that share of responsibility is what? To gain influence. If you don't have influence, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) made it clear – *[sentence in Arabic]* – that the upper hand is more powerful.

Ramadan: The giving hand.

Yasin: Than the lower hand. He said *[sentence in Arabic]* that the resourceful believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak one. Let's just put all that into context. So what do we need to do? We need to have a voice. And not just any voice. Not just a nebulous voice. A very clear, surgical voice that's respected, that's moral, that's powerful, that cannot be dismissed. To speak on issues relevant to Islam and Muslims. And that voice is developing.

Ramadan: You mean in the time and society they live in?

Yasin: In the society and the time they live in. The here and now. That is developing. And it's developing in America. It's developing in Europe. It's developing in Australia. Unfortunately, that kind of voice is not developing in the so-called classical Muslim world.

Ahmed: And that is a very interesting point also because it ties back to what we started with. And it also speaks into this conversation we have recent years that, you know, has Islam become more or less relevant within the last 30 to 40 years? So I would actually like to hear you on this topic. Like, would you say that Islam has become more or less relevant the last 30 to 40 years?

Yasin: No, more relevant. Definitely. Let's just talk about some hot issues here. I mean, not to discuss them and to be particular about it. Let's talk about the LGBTQXYZ alphabet phenomena. Let's talk about that. And this is not to, again, indict anybody. It's just a phenomena. And if they want to present themselves, they have to allow us to also discuss it. It's not – if they want to be inclusive, OK,

then they got to understand that it goes with the territory. That's something that's very controversial and all that has to be discussed. And for me, I want to take that discussion. I'm more than willing to sit on a panel and discuss this phenomena. People do not have the right to take their quilted blanket and throw it over my head and tell me to just, like, this is what it is. Oh, no. No, this is my society. I have my own constitutional values. I have my own religious values. I have a family. Hello. You know what I'm saying? I have a trajectory. I have a future. I have my own ideas. And I'm not going to let people who's got more freedom, they think, than anyone else and just impose that upon me. No, you have a right to speak. You have a right to act. You have a right to be influential. You have a right to be listened to. And no one should take that right away from anyone, regardless of who they are.

OK, if the constitution in the society allows everyone to have that voice, then guess what? The individual on their own has the same voice as a group of people who's a special interest group. And these are issues that have to be discussed. So if Muslims are going to discuss this here, either they're going to discuss it as a reactionary or they're going to discuss it as being responsible. I want to be responsive. I don't want to be a reactionary. That means let's talk about the values. Let's talk about what we lose. Let's talk about family. Let's talk about community. Let's talk about, you understand what I mean, like individual – let's talk about morality. Let's talk about the social dysfunction. Let's talk about dis-ease, which is the word disease. Let's talk about, you know, send me, you know, like replacement. Let's talk about dysfunction. Let's talk about what we lose, OK, on the way to like this unbridled freedom.

OK, no, I say we've got to be somewhere between individual freedom and some kind of parameters that preserve the traditions of society. And if people don't agree that family is the major basis for society, then the elevator doesn't go all the way upstairs. Sorry. And we can just see that in Europe today. OK, what has been lost in Europe more than anything else? Family values. Why has family values been lost? Because of this excessive type of freedom. Islam says, yes, the individual has to have freedom. But we have to protect what is normal. We got to protect society. We got to protect the family. The thought of family, not the thought of individuality. God created us as individuals to be families. Those who believe in God, those who don't believe in God, well, we need to have that kind of a discussion.

And so the Dawah for today, we have to be prepared to discuss controversial issues, issues that are not controversial to us, but they may be considered to be controversial, because it's a new phenomena. They need to be discussed and they need to be discussed in a way, not blaming, not condemning, not calling names and not, you know, you understand what I mean?

Ramadan: Demonizing.

Yasin: Demonizing and all that kind of stuff. No, we need to have discussions so that the people on the side who themselves could be victims or they could be, you know, somebody – they could be involved. They need to hear the story. So this is one.

Another issue would be the issue of riba. Riba, you know, this whole idea of interest. So I ask people who talks about riba, you know, the guys who's always saying, you know, the riba is like having sex with your mother at the Kaaba, blah, blah, blah. All this kind of stuff like that. OK, we heard that. Hello. We heard all that rhetoric. But now what I want to know: Right now, you want to own a house in Europe. I mean, a nice four-bedroom home in Europe in a nice neighborhood. What's it going to cost? Well, if you're in London, it's going to cost probably like about six million British pounds. OK, I don't know what that equates to in Kroners. So is the hardworking Danish, is the hardworking Dutch, is the hardworking English or the hardworking American who needs to have a million-dollar home –

are they going to get that in cash? They save that up in cash? No, they didn't. That means that either they're never going to own a home or they're going to have some different means of getting a home. Well, that means that we got to sit down and we got to talk about this issue of riba.

Now, most people say that riba is interest. Yeah, it is a special form of interest, but it doesn't express the word interest completely. Interest in English means something that is in interest to you and something that's an interest to me. So it became to be something that was an interest to the bankers and interest to me also to the people who was buying a home. That's why it was called interest. OK, now the Bible or the scripture does not eliminate interest because everybody has an interest. All principals have an interest. But the issue: Compounded interest, exploitive interest. You see, usurious interest. This is what riba is. OK, I'm just saying from my own research.

And I attended a couple of powerful seminars to discuss this issue. We need to sit down and discuss this issue of interest so that Muslims come up with a way and a tool to go into the financial markets and become involved without feeling as if they're guilty from the very beginning. Because the castrated scholars who is drawing on something from fountains that have dried up, OK, it's given us some kind of fatwas because they were afraid. Well, they were afraid of cryptocurrency. When cryptocurrency first came out, all the scholars said, Haram, Haram, Haram. You know, when the mobile phone came out, they were saying Haram, Haram, Haram. When the TVs came out, there was a Haram, Haram, Haram. But now all the scholars. OK, they got TVs. They all got phones. And some of them also are doing what?

Ramadan: They once said the printing press was Haram.

Yasin: The printing press was Haram. So we got to get over this here by people who are able to think and they're not afraid to think. And so by doing what? Having discussions. So we are in an age right now where having discussions, not just convictions, but discussions, listening to people, people who are part of our opposition.

You know, sometimes you've got to even listen to – I ask people a question sometimes, if you don't mind, I don't think I'm digressing, but I just want to say this here. Would you rather have a stupid friend or intelligent enemy? Well, most people when they think about it, you know, they're thinking personal, you know, well, I'd like to have a friend. Then you're stupid, too. No, no one wants to have a stupid friend. A stupid friend is going to be a liability the rest of your life because they're going to be making stupid decisions. When you come up with something intelligent, they're not going to be to add to that conversation.

No, it's obvious. If you think about it, you'd rather have an intelligent enemy. Why? Because the intelligent enemy – at least you can reason with them. Right? You can't reason with a stupid friend. An intelligent enemy. Because if they're intelligent, they might be your enemy right now, but in business they might be an ally. If they're reasonable, down the line they can listen to your justifications and to your examples and all of that and they might become waliyyun ḥamim, as the Quran calls them. Somebody that was your enemy before and they become your friend. So that's the obvious answer.

But most of the scholars or most of the students of knowledge or many of them, they wouldn't come up with that same conclusion. "I'd rather be with a stupid Muslim than with an intelligent kafir." Oh, hey, guy, what kind of phone are you using? You know, what kind of doctor do you go to? What kind of pharmacology are you using? OK, what kind of algorithms are you using? OK, what kind of technology are you using? I mean, I don't see any phones, I don't see any watches, I don't see any clocks, I don't see any materials that's got some like Muslim brand on it. So that's kind of like a

contradiction. If we think it out, we need all kinds of people. But in order to do that, you've got to be open-minded. You've got to think outside the box. And that's sort of a disposition that I've taken upon myself in some way, shape or form.

Ramadan: Can I ask you – you mentioned the LGBT plus issue. That's something that's a huge part of the society we live in right now. And Muslims are not really taking part in that conversation that much. But you also mentioned before that many Muslims get stuck. They don't follow the development, the progress that societies go through. Couldn't this just be a progress that society is going through? And people who is not following that progress is just stuck behind?

Yasin: Yeah, there are people that are just stuck. I mean, in other words, to discuss an issue, you don't have to be in it. We've got to be in the society. We've got to diagnose. We've got to study. You know, we've got to make a diagnosis, a prognosis. We've got to make a treatment plan. We've got to be in it to win it. And now that means that, like, if I'm going through a fire, I put on my asbestos suit. You know, if I'm swimming the English Channel, I've got to put on a special swimming suit. So if I'm in this here society that is very progressive, OK, very upscale, very dynamic, very challenging society. Guess what, guys? Either... If you're going to be in the kitchen, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. You know, if you can't stand the pace of the society, well, go somewhere where the pace is not there. Just go somewhere and chill out and become part of the reaction. Become part of what happens, because you're not going to be a part of those who make it happen.

We Muslims, we want to be a part of what makes it happen. We want to fly the plane. We want to drive the car. We want to make the car. We want to be in the cutting edge of technology. We want to be – If we're not in government, we want to influence government. We don't want to be in the streets marching and shouting and all that. We want to pave the streets. We want to light the streets. You know, we want to be the ideas that people come out and it's our cause. We want to be the designers. We want to be the architects of the cause.

And we don't always want to be in opposition to government because government is a blessing. What's the opposite of government? Chaos! So the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) was never against government. He was always against policies, not against government. So if you're against governments, you're never going to attract the leaders of government because you're against their interests. But if you're just against policies, but you support government itself, then it's possible that people inside government will listen, and they will become Muslims.

Ramadan: But some people might see it as: If you don't follow progressive policies, you're stuck behind.

Yasin: Well, that's just their opinion. At the end of the day, man, who doesn't want to drive a Tesla? I mean, who wants to get on the Autobahn with a Ford Focus? I mean, come on. I mean, let's really be honest. Inside your house, man, you don't want a microwave? Inside your house, you know what I'm saying, do you want a stone oven? Inside your house, you want to go out and get buckets and buckets of water or you want running water? Inside your house, you want to... we got to be honest with ourselves. If you want the fine products of the society, but you don't want to be a part of society, then there's something that...

Ramadan: What if taking part in society means letting go of some of your values?

Yasin: No, it doesn't mean that. My values can be very much intact. And still I can be Dutch, I can be Danish, I can be American, I can be whatever I want to be and keep my values intact. You see, we got to understand the difference between progress and technology. We say Western ideas and modern

ideas. No, I don't want to adopt Western ideas, but I definitely need to adopt modern ideas. I mean, Allah says strive is in a race. So if you're racing, you want to be on a bicycle or you want to be in a Tesla?

There's people in America called the Amish. I mean, you know, the people in Amish, you know, the ones that cut the mustache, they got the big beards and the big hats and the ladies got the bonnets and all that. The Amish, OK, they don't use electric, they don't drive cars and all that. They own 20,000, 30,000 acres of land. They're doing agriculture. And so I respect them. But guess what? I don't want to be stuck like them because of some ideals they got. No, I like what they have accomplished. They own land. They're on the land. They're growing the food that they're eating. And they're very practical people, powerful, influential people. But they're stuck in the past. I don't want to be stuck in the past. I want to basically – I want to have the land. I want to be able to farm the land with a new kind of what you call...

Ramadan: But if the society you live within dictates that you have to accept some specific policies and ideas...

Yasin: No, that's not true. No, no, that's not true. No, they write policies. They write policies like that. But we do not have a dictator in Europe. Mussolini was a dictator. Stalin was a dictator. Hitler was a dictator.

Ramadan: You have French schools that doesn't allow hijab.

Yasin: No, no. That's just one phenomena. All the Muslims in France, OK, don't have to adopt that. That's just a challenge. And you don't have to stay in France. You got a problem about hijab? There are other countries in Europe that you can move to. So Allah said the earth is wide. So if you're stuck in France, move, move to another place. The hijab element is only one element.

Ramadan: So just trying to challenge you, Sheikh, you said that you should take part in the conversation in society. And now you say that if it gets too rough –

Yasin: - in one place, go to another place. If it's too rough in one place, go to another place.

Ramadan: Before moving, shouldn't we take part in the conversation?

Yasin: Well, taking part in the conversation is like what we're talking about right now. We're not living in a static society. France is not a static society. Macron is not France. He's a present leader in France, OK, that we have to interact with. But a new party can come tomorrow. For instance, we just had an election in Turkey. Right?

Ramadan: Yeah.

Yasin: Right. A very close election. That's what democracy can – that's what can happen. OK. Just through just through the voting mechanism, things can change radically. Is that correct?

Ahmed: Yeah.

Yasin: Well, most of us who are Islamists, we were praying for Erdogan, not because we are Erdoganians, OK, we're praying for Erdogan because he's representing a movement in Europe that we feel is in the interest of Islam. He's representing a movement in the Muslim world that we think is good for Islamic values. We believe that, most of us, OK, who are progressive minded people. Now, others can say, well, he's not so Islamic. He's not so this. He's – that's their opinion. So I would ask those people, well, who would be our options? That's the conversation. So for me, I'm saying the



world is a global village today. The world is a global village. So our conversations have to go outside of France.

Ramadan: And you really had to – or you got to experience globalization before it happened because you got to you got to travel a lot.

Yasin: That's correct.

Ramadan: Before official globalization had happened.

Yasin: Yes, that's correct. So, you know, globalization from a Western perspective is about gaining the maximum amount of power in the world for a certain group of people. That's globalization from a Western perspective. But globalization, you understand what I mean, from a micro perspective, you and I, is our gaining. *[Sentences in Arabic]* This is the verse I was trying to get before. This is our answer to globalization. *[Sentence in Arabic]* Pray. Say. Go Hajj. Read. Have the right iman and guidance. Do Dawah. All of that there. Pay your Zakat. Read Quran. Make Dhikr. You know, talk about the problem. Our values. About the hijab and about our morality. This is akhirah. But Allah says: *[Sentence in Arabic]* But don't forget your responsibility in this dunya. And so the dunya here doesn't mean America. The dunya means the whole world phenomena where human beings are living. So Allah said don't forget your share in that. So to be a Muslim is to be a globalist. To be a Muslim is to be a social activist and to be a Muslim is to be concerned. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) was asked by someone who is the best person. He said: *[sentence in Arabic]* The best person is those who give the most benefit to human beings. Now, that's as global as you can get.

Ahmed: It's a very beautiful way of putting it. And I would say that there is also this challenge, especially here in Europe, for example, or in the West, probably also everywhere else where the discourse about Islam can also get sour. So it's the idea of Muslims kind of, you know, combating all of these misconceptions and trying to influence people in a positive way, as well as still maintaining their values and their principles. You know, not - just being a rock and not being wavy on their deen. It can also be, I mean, a part of the conversation is also this part about, you know, cancelling, let's say, Islam or, you know, cultures or religions or, you know, movements that are not mainstream, that people view as they are like, they're stuck behind at times in certain views. So I would like to ask you if you think there has been an attempt to cancel Islam in the 21st century?

Yasin: Sister Asiya, look, with all due respect, if I've got a six-figure job in Turkey, you know, I'm making a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand dollars a year job and I'm forced to travel on public transportation. OK, so like, you know, I'm a classical Muslim guy. I don't want no women touching all on me. I'm a classical hijabi. I don't want no guys touching on me. But guess what? Public transportation in Turkey, it means taking the subway! And if you're taking the subway at rush hour, guess what? All your classic ideas and all that is out the window. Otherwise you can drive. You can get on the highway in your little car and take two hours to get where you're going to go. So are there some compromises, if you want to call it? But they're not moral compromises, they're necessary compromises because of the vehicle, because the road, because of the time, because of the conditions that we're on. So we've got to separate these things. This comes about through discussions.

I'd like to give another example. You know, there's our hijabis, our Somali hijabi sisters, the ones I call the queens of the hijab. Because no women – no Muslim women in the 21st century – championed the hijab just by their doing it like the Somalis. Now, everywhere they go, they revolutionize the hijab –

Ramadan: Agreed.

Yasin: – because of their attitude. Not because they're philosophical. It's their attitude. It's like, no, we ain't doing that! We're not changing our clothes. We'll go back. Send me to Somalia. We'll go back to the camps and we'll start off from scratch. But we're not taking off our hijab. Because they had that attitude, now the hijab has been what? Revolutionized all over the world. May Allah bless those simple sisters who did that.

So this shows that you can take an attitude. You can take a classical attitude, and that attitude? People learn to respect it. And if you go to America, Somali sisters are driving a bus. Somali sisters, you know, they're parking the cars for Avis and for the car dealerships. Somali sisters got marketplaces. Somali sisters are in Dubai sitting next to the gold shops. They still got on the hijab and all that there because they didn't give that part of it up. But they're very much involved. So we have to learn – in the society where we're at – that inclusion doesn't mean moral compromise.

Ahmed: No. Do you view this like as a kind of a pushback to this whole movement of trying to cancel Muslims and Islam?

Yasin: Well, people are going to try to do what they can do. But guess what? We got to be smart enough to do what we want to do. We got to be smart enough to keep our agenda moving. Sometimes you got to take two steps back to make one step forward. Sometimes you got to take what's considered to be a compromise or slide to the side, as we call it. You know, a slide to the side doesn't mean that you gave up anything. You slid to the side and let that go by and you're moving forward. So it's like chess. Chess is not checkers. Those who's playing checkers - and it's the same board, but they're not the same game. So I think it's an adoption of techniques. The adoption of logistics is an adoption of strategy.

And if you haven't thought your Islam out about that, maybe you're being made to feel, OK, that you're being pushed back. But I'm not made to feel that way. If I'm in the corporate boardroom - picture me coming to the corporate boardroom, trying to do a multibillion-dollar deal with an Afghani robe on or a Saudi ghutra on or with some slippers or barefootedness. No, it's not accepted in the corporate culture. OK, so I keep my values and all that there.

I mean, Aliko Dangote, OK, one of the wealthiest men in the world. They said that he's the fifth wealthiest man in the world. He just built a refinery in Nigeria, the biggest oil refinery on the continent. He removed the debt of Nigeria from the World Monetary Organization. He removed that debt so that Nigeria is now able to pump its own oil, refine its own oil. And when you see Aliko Dangote, if you see him in his city of Kano, when he's with his traditional people, he's wearing his cap. He's wearing his gowns and all that because that's his place. But on the corporate board table in America, in Venice, in this place, in The Hague and over there in America and all that. This guy is a Harvard graduate. This guy is a corporate genius. He's a billionaire. And what is he wearing? He's wearing corporate suits.

So we have to learn how to move where we got to move and not be listening to the people who are closed minded and restricted, you know, to be dictating our movements. That's why I said we need to have conversations.

Ramadan: But chess is much more difficult than checkers, Sheikh. Do you get my...?

Yasin: Excuse me?

Ramadan: Chess is more difficult than checkers.

Yasin: That's right. That's why you don't find too many illiterate people playing chess. I'm not saying that you should play chess or don't play chess. I'm just saying that just looking at the difference in the games, chess is like multidimensional. Checkers is kind of like linear. Anybody can move and take this one and move and take that one. But everybody can't play chess. And I'm using that as a terminology because people in the Western world, people in the educated world, they play chess. Okay. And regardless of what people consider to be halal, haram or mubah or whatever they want to call it, I'm not saying talking about that part. I'm just saying that we have to be logistic. We have to be strategic. We got to be forward-minded. We have to plan, because - that's part of my talk right now. Those who fail to plan, plan to fail. Sociologically, we're not planning. We're reacting. And most of the people who have ideas and fears and all those kinds of things it's because they didn't plan very well. And if you let other people plan for you, then guess what? Your life is going to be limited.

Ahmed: So what I'm hearing you say is that, you know, especially the Muslims that are very firm in their Islam and their deen and they maintain their values and are very proud of that identity - that, you know, by doing - by having that pride in their deen, they can actually move things and change people and influence -

Yasin: Of course.

Ahmed: Yeah. And I completely agree. And I think it's a very beautiful thing. But in the context where we are, because Muslims in the West, they often have like tensions between themselves and some parts of society, as we've also discussed. So that could sometimes also be a bit of a hassle because, for example, Muslim women here in Denmark, most recently, we also had like a controversy. We have this fashion magazine. They are speaking for Muslim women, saying that the hijab is really like a woman's choice. And then we had like this, you know, what's it called like on social media? People just were outraged by this, especially Muslim women. So Muslim women are trying to like take back the narrative for themselves and say, you know, our hijab is our choice and it's not an oppression. Like the mainstream thought maybe that, you know, Muslim women are oppressed.

Yasin: Sister Asiya, mainstream is mainstream. They have their own agenda. They have their own interests. Muslim women and their identity and their values and their dignity - that's their field. Let Muslim women go through that struggle. And we're going to see that, in the Western world, that struggle is already being engaged in and we're winning. OK, we have a young sister in America called Ilhan Omar.

Ahmed: Yeah.

Yasin: A young, dynamic Somali sister. Muslim.

Ahmed: Yeah.

Yasin: Now, do we agree with all her positions? Do we agree with how she personifies the hijab? But it's none of our business who she's married to. It's none of our business how she dresses in a certain way to compromise to the corporate field and all that. It's none of our business. But what I can say is this dynamic lady, she stood up to Donald Tramp. And I can say that now because he's not the president. Donald Tramp. And it be proven now that he's just a tramp. OK, he's a rich tramp. He's an influential tramp. But he's a tramp. OK. And the tramps that go along with him. Well, she stood next to this guy and told him, Mr. Trump, you're the president of the United States of America and I'm going to respect that office. But you're the most disrespectful. You're the most obnoxious. You're the most stupid guy. I mean, I don't even know how you got here, but that's not my point. But I'm going to be your worst nightmare. She's still there and he's out. That shows what courage can do.

Now, I'm not saying that she's my hero. I'm not saying that I agree with every position that she takes. I'm just saying that she's a congresswoman. She's not just somebody like a celebrity out there just talking; she's a congresswoman! She drafts. She helps to draft. And she's an Islamist.

I say that we have to have enough courage. And what we need more of is Muslim brothers and sisters who would be out there with her to give her more protection and give her more insulation and to help her become more refined rather than be stepping back, sitting back, casting arrows of contradictions and blah, blah, blah. No, we need to be in the forefront. Somebody has to be challenging. And when you're challenging and you're in the forefront, you're going to take the first arrows. You're going to make some mistakes, but you got to be willing to make a mistake to be out there.

Now, if you just want to be safe, you know, stay in your bunkers. Stay in your cultural, religious bunkers and you'll be safe. OK, put your head in the ground like an ostrich, not realizing that your entire body is exposed. You know, you can do that, too. So I just say that this is the real world that we're living in.

And when it comes to certain issues about assaults upon our values - our values were assaulted upon long time ago. But Allah says: *[Arabic sentences]* So our values have been stepped on and trashed and imposed upon and intruded upon long before now. But patience, perseverance, consistency has brought Islam out each time and Islam will win. And like one scholar said, Al-Mustaqbal: *[Arabic sentence]* The future belongs to this deen. It's us Muslims who don't realize that the future is already won. If we stay our path. Don't be a reactionary. Be responsive. Be involved. But that doesn't mean to be overwhelmed. Modify the culture and bring out the Islam and have a good behavior.

Because at the end of the day, it's your behavior that people smell. It's your behavior that people see. And if you want Islam to be appreciated, be like that glass of water right there. Let people see right through it. Because if you took two glasses of water. One is cloudy. We don't say what's clouding it. One is cloudy and one is clean. And you tell somebody, take the glass of water that you want. It has nothing to do with religion. Which one are they going to take? The one that's clean. We have to be clean. We have to be clear. We have to be prominent. We have to be progressive. We have to be influential. We have to be trend setters. Right? We got to be influencers. If we're all of that and also reasonably Muslim, Islam will play its part.

Ramadan: Just to clarify, Sheikh, when you say progressive, do you mean progressive like the progressive movement you have in the US?

Yasin: No, no, no. I don't mean progressive in anybody else's terms. I mean progressive in the sense of the definition of the word. Progressive means moving forward with relevance and with dignity, with respect and with benefit and the interest of the society that surround you. That's progressive. I don't mean progressive by anybody else's definition.

Ramadan: As we mentioned in the beginning, you're reaching 77 years old?

Yasin: Yeah, in about 30 days.

Ramadan: So you've been Muslim for many, many years and you have got to experience Islam in the West and in the East. So we chose to have some personal questions for you here at the end. The first question I personally want to ask is which person had the most impact or influence on you personally?

Yasin: Without any doubt I think that Al-hajj Malik Shabazz, Malcolm X, probably for African-Americans especially, we got to say without any doubt that he had the most impact because he impacted upon us when we were young. And his message has transcended itself to be relevant even today. So I have to say that an uneducated - in terms of the formal educational means - an uneducated, sophisticated minded, challenging, social activist, powerful speaker -

Ramadan: Charismatic leader.

Yasin: - charismatic, moralist and a guy that only flew. I mean, he turned from caterpillar into butterfly. 1964 he became a butterfly. October 1964 he became a butterfly. That's when he became a Muslim. That's when he made Hajj. I'm sorry, he made Hajj back in I think it was August and September. Then he traveled to some Muslim countries and to whatever and then he came back to America around the end of November. So from 64. So from November until the time he was assassinated he flew. That part of his life transcended all the way up until now where he's still considered to be the icon of ideological revolution when it comes to a Muslim in the Western world and not just in America but almost all over the world. How did that happen? Because that's what Allah wanted. So he has to be.

But I'm a student of - I'm an enthusiast of biographies. I probably read the biographies of at least 50 or 60 people who have impacted the world. And Abul A'la Maududi is one of my heroes. Hassan al-Banna is one of my heroes. Okay. Muhammad Abdul Wahab is one of my heroes. Mansa Musa is one of my heroes. So I could go on and talk about people who have impacted my life.

I mean my teacher Hafid Magbul Ilahi Punjabi who took me by the hand, walked me into Haram twice when I performed Hajj, who took me through the Quran seven times with makharij and with reading. And then encouraged me to go to Medina to finish my studies. He's one of my heroes. My teacher in Mecca today, Sheikh Khalid al-Halwani, who was a young cleric and teacher of aqidah, a graduate of Umm al-Qura. I was at that time when I met him 52. He was only at that time 29. Right? So I was his student. I'm still his student. But now moving forward now I'm sort of part of being his teacher in some respects but he's still my teacher. He's one of my heroes.

So I mean I've got a lot of unsung heroes. My mother is one of my heroes because over a cup of coffee in her house, she made some master moves in my life that I can never forget. So I've got a lot of heroes that contributed to my life. And if I talked about all of them, we'd probably have to have another program. But I hope that I've addressed.

Ramadan: Yeah.

Ahmed: What do you consider to be your biggest achievement?

Yasin: Maybe my biggest achievement is that I've crossed over through generations. I've been to 134 countries. You said in the introduction that I've lectured in 89 cities. That was kind of like something that was said on Wikipedia. Wicked Pedia.

*[Ahmed and Ramadan laugh]*

Yasin: That was something that was said on social media maybe about 15 years ago. So I didn't correct you. I've actually traveled to about 134 countries. Maybe lecturing in about 129 of those countries. And what Allah has allowed me to do – ala fadlihi, by his grace – is that I've been able to talk to people of my generation. I've been with the baby boomers. I've been able to talk in the same way to my children. I think you call those the X generation. OK?

Ramadan: Generation X.

Yasin: And then you got the millennials. You get the millennials and then you got, you know, somebody now you got the -

Ahmed: Gen Z.

Yasin: Gen Z. So my message for some reason resonates all the way down to Gen Z. Now, how that happened, I don't know.

Ahmed: And even more like beyond that, because the people that are born, you know, 2005, they're also -

Yasin: Mashallah.

Ahmed: - I mean, grown up now.

Yasin: So I think Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) for that and I just think it's because I've neglected my family by traveling. Maybe I've been a bit selfish in that regard. I've sort of like been the Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Battuta, you know what I'm saying, of the Dawah. Some people say that. But I'm just thankful that Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) selected me or facilitated me to have this kind of voice, to have that kind of intact interaction, to have that kind of passion. And if that's an accomplishment, well, let me put it in another way. Why is Michael Jackson - why is he the icon that he is today? Because he crossed over. He crossed over. Regardless of why he crossed over, he crossed over, and he was able to affect four generations. What do they call the Indian Hollywood? What do they call it?

Ramadan: Bollywood.

Yasin: Yeah, if you go to Bollywood - all their dances, all their choreography is all what? It's all Michael Jackson. So how was that guy's influence able to cross over like that, at that time, at that place, in this age with the gift that God gave him? And I'm not talking about music here. I'm not talking about Michael Jackson as an idol here. I'm just talking about the phenomena of crossing over that I thank God that he allowed me and I ask him to continue to allow me to cross over.

Ahmed: Ameen.

Ramadan: Sheikh, you have met many influential people throughout the years. And I once heard a rumor that Michael Jackson converted to Islam. Have you heard that rumor?

Yasin: He did.

Ramadan: He did?

Yasin: There's not a doubt about it. It's not a rumor. His brother told me that he was present when Michael took Shahada. I mean, he even made a song. He made a song about Allah. I mean, he crossed over. He took Shahada. His brother, who was also Muslim, told me his brother took Shahada. I mean, there are other witnesses. His sister, Janet, said that he took Shahada. I think that Janet also took her Shahada. She was married to a Muslim.

So I don't think that it should be such an issue of phenomena that celebrities who come in contact with very influential Muslims at a time in their life that they read, they study at times of depression or reflection that they read the Quran or they're in the company of a Muslim that they take Shahada. But does that mean that they got to put on a kufi? They got to put on a thawb? They got to look like an Asian or an Arab? They got to meet somebody else's cultural standards? Doesn't mean that at all.

Michael Jackson took Shahada. And before he died, he was very much a Muslim going through the challenges of what he had to go through in his own personal life. OK, and what he embraced in terms of being a Muslim. There's no doubt about it. If there are people who are rumoring it is because of the fact that they're not connected to the facts.

Ramadan: All right. Thank you for clarifying. I just heard it once and I thought maybe, maybe, just maybe, you knew someone who -

Yasin: There's no doubt about it.

Ramadan: But you knew his brother.

Yasin: Yes, of course.

Ramadan: Yeah. Another question we had for you was: You're known for addressing the youth, speaking to the youth. If you should give one advice for the youth in a few minutes, what would it be?

Yasin: I'll spend more. First, step back for a moment, whatever you're doing, whatever interests you, whatever tools that you have, whatever education that you have, whatever trajectory that you have placed yourself in, regardless of your family or society or your challenges, step back for a moment and do a life plan. A life plan, not a career plan, because a career plan prepares you for society and how you're going to serve society. But a life plan is you. It's your plan. How you want to how you want to set your pattern, how you want to map out your life, what you want to accomplish in the next five to ten years. OK, who you want to be, what level that you want to be in a society. Step back for a moment and think about that. And since you've got the tools, if you can't write, well, speak it, dictate it. OK. And after you speak it or you dictate it or you type it, then after that, organize it. Put it into a two-page essay. OK. Spell check it, format it. OK. After that, give it to somebody who you respect and you get their OK. Then after that, memorize it. Once you memorize that, you internalize it, you digitize it inside yourself. That becomes inside of your DNA.

And you stop. You stop being invited by your friends. And you start selecting your friends. Your pattern of life will change whether you are a good Muslim, a strong Muslim or intellectual Muslim or whatever your aspirations are. When you find that you have a life plan, you'll find that you are stronger, you're more focused, you're more disciplined. OK, you're going to accomplish more. You're going to be able to step back when you make mistakes and check yourself. You're going to look at the world in a different kind of way. You need to have a life plan. Those who fail to plan, plan to fail. And if you don't have a plan for your own life, definitely there are agencies and corporations that's planning your life right now. So if there's anything I want to say to young people like, hey, get a life plan.

And by the way, you know, without tooting my own horn, I'm giving a program this evening at the Hamid bin Khalifa Civilizational Center. And it's called Youth Empowerment or, you know, youth, human development, personal development. And it's called Life Plan GPS.

Ahmed: And this conversation has been so inspiring. And I think we could go on and on. But I just have a final question before we leave you. What do you wish for to be your legacy?

Yasin: I hope I can be remembered to be a social activist, that I broke some boundaries, that I touched some minds. I touched some hearts. And on the way, I touched some paper. Now, the young people understand what touching paper means. It's not just about touching minds and touching hearts. It is that you acquired some wealth to be influential so that you could implement your vision

and so that you can become intergenerational. Now, if I can do that, then I think that I've made my contribution to the 21st century.

Ahmed: Mashallah.

Ramadan: That's very much in line with what your biggest achievement is. So one could say that you have already reached that legacy.

Yasin: I'm humbled.

Ramadan: Sheikh Khalid, thank you for coming in and being with us on The Muslim Conversation.

Yasin: Thank you guys so much for bringing me here. It's been a very powerful experience.

Ramadan: Thank you.

Ahmed: Very happy to hear.

Ramadan: My name has been Elias Ramadan.

Ahmed: And my name is Asiya Ahmed. Thank you for listening to The Muslim Conversation.