

**By Imam Dr. Talib M. Shareef, USAF-Retired**

President, Masjid Muhammad, The Nation's Mosque

January 5, 2023

We acknowledge, call upon & give praise and thanks to Almighty G-d, The Compassionate, The Merciful. The same G-d for all of us, Who created us all and cares about us all equally. As-Salaam Alaykum, I extend the Greetings of G-d's Peace to all as well as my gratitude to the organizers for the invitation and for creating this space for these unifying moments of prayer and reflection on the theme: Faith for Democracy. Faith is the common property of every Human being regardless of label or religious Identity, and Faith is the strongest energy for the establishment of the life that G-d wants on earth.

We have gathered here upon Faith, on this eve of the anniversary commemorating the day our nation and the world witnessed an insurrection by fellow American citizens, right here, at this U.S. Capitol. It was an attempt to stop a Constitutionally ordained process of free - fair elections and a peaceful transition of power. We were shocked but not surprised by the violent assault that was launched on our democracy bringing America face-to-face w/itself. In coming face-to-face with our own humanity as a nation, the social fabric of our society, we began to see the threads coming apart.

Nevertheless, let us not overlook that a major enabler giving life to the present situation was a suitable environment. We, as a society, are a product of our environment. Before we can correct the problems of society, we must first correct the problems in ourselves. The Present inherits the Past. As a nation, we have inherited and have been caught in the mistakes of the past that are rooted in the fact that Human Beings were enslaved, oppressed, gravely mistreated, and used as beasts of burden. The nation grew and progressed, but its action during its growing process did not agree with its Constitutional position that all men are created equal & that all men have a God-given right to freedom, to life, to liberty, & to the pursuit of happiness. This conflict in the growth eventually brought about the end of chattel slavery and millions were physically freed. That "freedom" was just a move further in the path towards the real thing that the life of freedom was trying to manifest in America. Physical freedom came but some did not have the Human Dignity of other people and were not recognized as equal citizens of the nation. This tells us that a significant number of people, they had not yet seen the values that they claimed to stand up for. Despite the beautifully worded constitution, human beings were still gravely mistreated. There remained a disposition that said, "Yes, we believe that black people should not be chained or denied their rights, but we do not like to see them share w/us in America as our equals."

The Reality is that we are all, equally, the children of Adam, when he was created on the 6th day, He didn't have a racial identity ... ethnic ID, nor national ID etc, those IDs came later – The 1st Identity - Adam's 1st Identity given by Almighty G-d, The Creator, was human. And from that ID came all the wonderful, beautiful, diverse expressions of Human life that have contributed to the beauty and strength of America. The Human identity is the most important ID and it will always be strong enough to support all other identities. The truth is anytime a new baby is born we see Adam again, good, pure, innocent, obedient to the life and the nature it was created upon, loving & ready to receive love, etc. The baby comes here upon UNIVERSALS - not conscious of themselves as a race, ethnicity, nationally, etc, only human, and speaks universally, loves, cries, laughs, and communicates the same. The mother, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, etc, in a state of nature, she feeds that child right from the place where she

wants to hold that new precious life, right by her heart. A beautiful endearing powerful picture of love and compassion. Love is a key ingredient to a healthy Human being, healthy relationships, and a healthy Human society. Dr. King said, "...We must meet the forces of Hate with the Power of Love."

If there was or is a time for unity & solidarity, the time is now. The unity we are to have can only manifest when there is real Faith. Real faith requires real work to realize it. We can never simply believe, we have to also build upon our beliefs.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said: "You will never enter the garden of paradise unless you have Faith, and you will never have Faith until you practice loving one another.

Faith is first but there is a condition for Faith- Love, until we practice loving each other. How can you say you love Allah, G-d, whom you can't see and you don't even even love your brother and sister whom you see daily.

When you practice loving one another you strengthen bonds and because your brother or sister sees / knows you love him/her - He/she believes in you and trusts you - Faith is not just a belief, it is also trust. We say "In G-d we Trust" So...Prophet Muhammad said "No Trust, no Faith."

In Islam we have to testify, a declaration called the Shahadah: when we do that we are Saying our Faith is 1st in G-d – then Faith in man. It's a requirement of G-d, that we have Faith in Him and in human beings.

This is a time for us to brighten up our hopes and have faith not only in G-d but also faith in one another, in mankind and subsequently Faith in our Democracy

America began "In the name of G-d," and We say, "one nation, under G-d" and "E Pluribus Unum", one out of many (expressing the makeup of the U.S. populous), we're a nation of nations. A country made up of people from every land. We Choose our leaders and We need our leaders to be respectful and reflective of our reality and to live up to the responsibility that WE, the citizens of this country have entrusted to them. That is, provide good government for the people, by the people, and to protect the rights of all citizens. For G-d's sake!!! Let us have a true democracy and truly treat all citizens equally as the creation of the Creator. We are here as people of faith, united, extending an invitation for us to respect and embrace our shared Identity as humans and Americans, to stay the course, do your civic duty and to value our intrinsic nature to live together peacefully and intelligently. We pray for our Creator's help in sustaining our resilience, patience, strength, and inherent goodness as we turn towards each other as fellow citizens. May our Creator be our bridge over troubled waters as we work to build bridges of peace over violence, Love over Hate, Faith over Fear, & Unity over Division.

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."