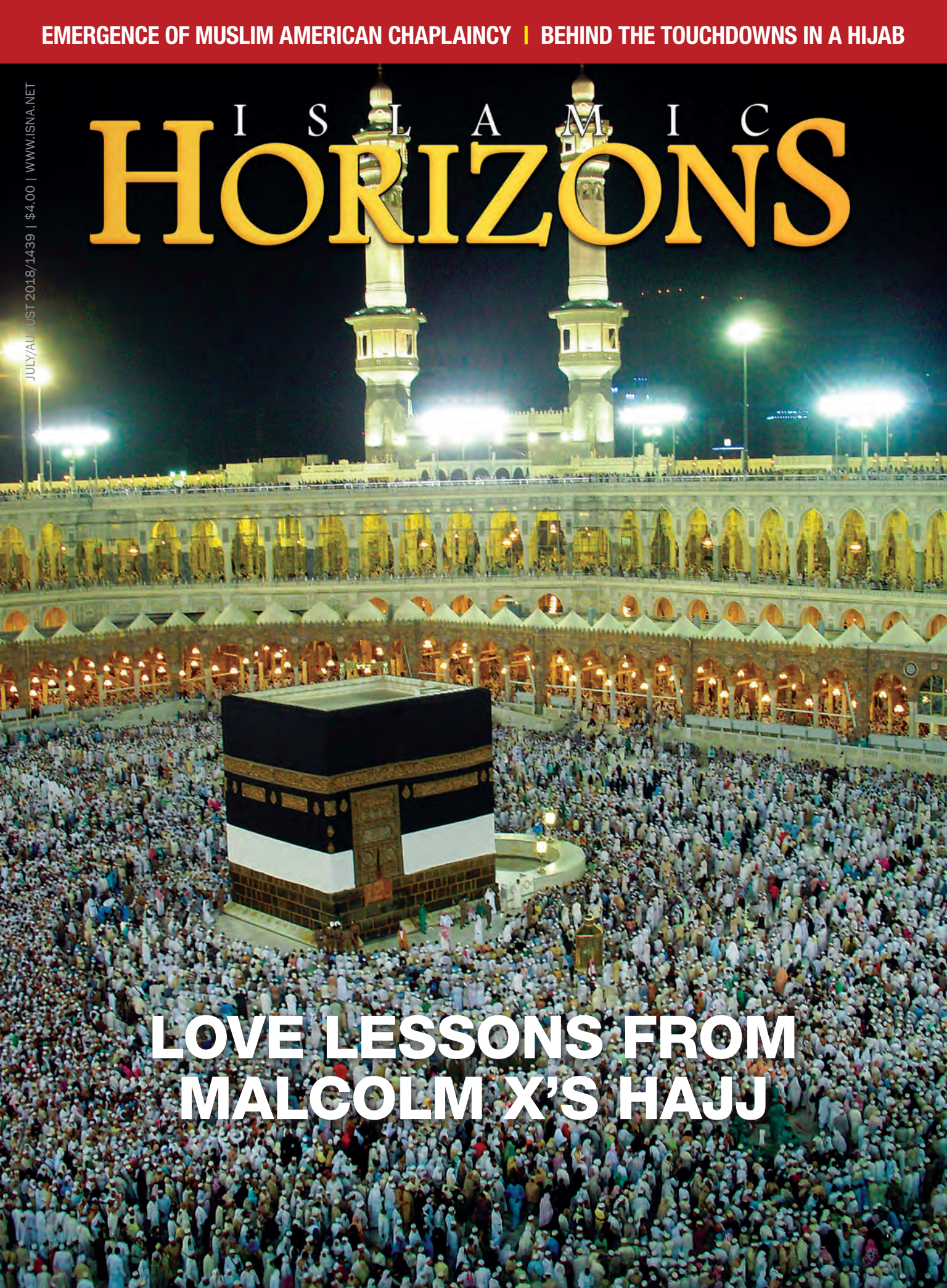


# I S L A M I C HORIZONS

**LOVE LESSONS FROM  
MALCOLM X'S HAJJ**





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# To Imbibe the Hajj in Its Spirit

**T**HIS ISSUE OF “ISLAMIC HORIZONS,” which will be with our readers some forty days before hajj, is blessed with an exclusive insight by Prof. Jimmy Jones, chair of African Studies and World Religions, Manhattanville College — the three “Love Lessons” that Malcolm X learned while on hajj and as he described them in his *Autobiography*.

Dwelling on his much-quoted observation about what he saw of “true brotherhood! In unity...” during this major event, Jones, opines, “If we take these ‘love lessons’ with us on hajj or learn them during hajj, there is a greater likelihood that our community will break loose from our obvious, painful mimicry of mainstream society’s color-based racial politics..”


Especially during Ramadan, when many Muslims read and strive to imbibe the guidance contained in the Quran, we need to attend to the values prescribed in 49:13: “O humanity! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (the one who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge (and) is well acquainted (with all things).”

This passage strikes a discordant voice to what is happening, or rather what the Muslims are doing to themselves, around the world. Ever since 2015, the people of Yemen have been mercilessly bombed by fellow Muslims and Arabs. After the destruction of Iraq and Syria, some of the Muslim world’s most developed countries, the flames of destruction are now being directed at what remains: Iran and Pakistan. Indeed, some tame Muslims view this as the vividly Islamophobic forces and leaders seeking to wring the life out of those of their coreligionists who refuse to abide by the self-serving edicts of

their masters. This is in addition to the never-ending massacres of Muslim men — and yes, even women and children — in Indian occupied Kashmir, Palestine, Libya and elsewhere.

Jones reminds that the impetus for a believer’s making hajj should be to *obey* God and *follow* the Prophet’s (*salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) Sunnah. Unfortunately, many of us who go on hajj don’t consider enhancing and sustaining a strong, loving connection with the Creator as our top priority. While the hajj is obligatory only on those who can physically and financially afford it, recent years have clearly shown that more emphasis is now being placed on providing for the rich, or rather the super rich, instead of creating an atmosphere in which ordinary Muslims can enjoy this unforgettable experience with true ease and dignity.

Malcolm X transformed himself from a defenseless target of racism into a major spokesperson for the Nations of Islam’s assertive, strident and racially focused philosophy. And yet after the hajj he abandoned that worldview. Thus, Jones asks, if hajj could so drastically transform his worldview, then why hasn’t it done the same for those of us who have made the same pilgrimage? Why does racism continue to plague our community? His answer for this phenomenon is that the racially inclusive, colorblind ethos that Malcolm X experienced during his 1964 hajj has still not become the norm for us.

Shootings, primarily carried out at schools, seem to have become a relatively new “norm” for Americans as well. One wonders, as have the inspirational and social media-savvy Parkland students and their allies, “how many more” students have to die before we do anything? Muslims need to ask “*how many more*” of us have to be humiliated, butchered, defeated and insulted before we do anything? 

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PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND 1946-2010



## Deir Yassin to Netanyahu: Are We Closer to Liberation?

Isolationist societies cannot survive in a globalized world

BY MAZIN QUMSIYEH

ON APRIL 8, 1948, MY MOTHER’S friend Hayah Balbisi (both at the time school teachers in Jerusalem) chose to go back to her village of Deir Yassin. That was the last time my mother saw her. In early 2017, a dying friend born in India and made a refugee during the 1947 Partition (of the Indian subcontinent) gave my mother a framed photograph of Hayah that he had found on the Internet. Both of their eyes teared up for this woman, who would have been their age had she lived. That friend, Mohammed Abdulqavi (affectionately known as Qavi), died soon after and realized his dying wish: to be buried in Palestine.

My mother, now 86, has seen it all — from the Nakba (1948; her mother was from Nazareth) to the Naksa (1967), the Jordanian civil war (1970), the 1973 war, the Sabra and Shatila massacres (1982), the 1987 uprising (she was at the front of demonstrations), the fake promises of Oslo (1993) and the massacres committed

since then. Deir Yassin was not the first or the largest massacre committed by Zionist forces during the ethnic cleansing of 1948-50, but it was prophetic and emblematic for Palestinians because its deliberate effect was magnified to scare the villagers — some survivors were paraded through the streets of Jerusalem, and loudspeakers told of impending massacres.

Dozens of massacres were committed in the six weeks leading up to Israel’s creation — more were carried out afterwards. In all, 534 villages and towns were depopulated in this bizarre 20th-century attempt to transform a multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual Palestine into the monolithic “Jewish state of Israel.” Seventy years later massacres are still being committed, whether here or in the Palestinian refugee camps of Gaza and Yarmouk. The latter, the largest Palestinian refugee camp and home to 160,000 Palestinians, was besieged and starved. People tried to subsist on grass; over 200 died of starvation and hundreds in the

bombardment. Largely destroyed now, one wonders where all the people are!

Sometimes my mother feels that it’s hopeless. We Palestinians face incredible odds. On one side is the most sophisticated and best financed settler colonial enterprises, backed by Western imperial power, and on the other side an orphaned people who continue to be betrayed by the Arab and Muslim leaders of nearby countries and by their own corrupt leaders. I try to let her know that no power lasts forever for the Roman, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Persian, Soviet and other empires all eventually fell.

History is dynamic. But I sometimes have doubts. I think of the British Empire’s machinations from the late 19th-century until today. I think of the Balfour (British) and Cambon (French) 1917 declarations in support of Zionism (partly quid pro quo in return for the Zionist lobby’s help in convincing the U.S. to enter WWI). I think of the U.S. support that started in 1918, the 1919 Paris “peace conference,” San Remo, the Mandate, the Saud family collusion, the January 1919 Faisal-Weizmann correspondence (Prince Faisal, representing and acting on behalf of the Arab Kingdom of Hejaz, and Dr. Chaim Weizmann, representing and acting on behalf of the Zionist Organization) and so much more. I am reminded of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s (d. 1937) “Pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will” (“*Cadernos do Cárcere*” [“Prison Notebooks”], 1948). I tell my mother that we don’t have the luxury of despair. We must keep hope alive.

Still, I wonder how can we gain a larger perspective on our lives and all of these tragedies? Here we are, tiny creatures among 7 billion humans who have spread around and damaged this beautiful blue planet ... a small planet in a small inconspicuous solar system, one of billions of solar systems in this galaxy, itself a small galaxy among billion and billions of galaxies. Maybe we take ourselves too seriously, I thought. How can I help get people to know that there are enough resources to feed everyone (now over a billion go hungry). The scientist in me wants to find logical explanations for why people kill each other instead of sharing and caring for one another. I try to convince myself with my own words to visitors to Palestine: lighting a candle is better than cursing the darkness, first do no harm, travel the path of your conscience even if few are doing it and so on. Maybe lack of sleep makes my mind



**LET'S JUST THINK OF THE POTENTIAL OUTCOMES OF COLONIAL/ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES. THERE ARE REALLY ONLY THREE: THE INDIGENOUS WIN (E.G., ALGERIA) OR LARGELY LOSE BY GENOCIDE (PARTIAL OR COMPLETE), OR REACH A WIN-WIN OR LOSE-LOSE SITUATION IN WHICH BOTH GROUPS LIVE IN ONE SHARED COUNTRY (E.G., SOUTH AFRICA). THE LATTER IS THE MOST SENSIBLE OUTCOME AND ALSO HAPPENS TO BE THE MOST COMMON ONE, AS OVER 100 COUNTRIES HAVE CHOSEN IT.**

wonder into Buddhist philosophies (Joyful participation in the sorrows of this world) and to mystic philosophies (Rumi's words come sloshing around my brain).

These thoughts are like shields to help us in this stark reality. The reality is that the vast majority of people (whether Americans, Palestinians or Israelis) are simply apathetic. Yarmouk, Deir Yassin, Tantura, Sabra and Shatila and others represent a heritage for some of us Palestinians and few other people who care. A country was stolen; 7.5 million of us are refugees or displaced. Zionists are happy that they managed to get Arabs and Muslims to kill each other, whether in Yemen or Syria.

According to a recent survey, 81.7 percent of Israeli Jews consider themselves "Zionist" or "very Zionist," while only 15.5 percent consider themselves "not so Zionist" or "not at all Zionist" (Hermann, Tamar. 2012. The Israeli Democracy Index. The Israeli Democracy Institute). These are dynamic statistics and thus liable to change. However, there is clear evidence that Zionism has reached a dead-end and the natural state of equilibrium must be restored, one in which the 12.5 million Palestinians (7.5 million of whom are refugees or displaced) and the 6.2 million Israeli Jews will find a way to live together in one country (Qumsiyeh, "Sharing the Land of Canaan: Human Rights and the Israeli-Palestinian Struggle." Pluto Press, London, 2004).

I have argued elsewhere that diversity is strength and that attempts to make monolithic societies will be resisted (Qumsiyeh, "Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History

of Hope and Empowerment." Pluto Press, London, 2010). Most isolationist ideologies are extinct or almost extinct: Crusaderism, Nazism, Stalinism and soon Zionism. It is possible (although that window is closing very quickly thanks to Israeli actions) to return Palestine to a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society (albeit with now a far more prominent Jewish and Hebrew presence). Zionists insist on their program, which is analogous to that of the Crusaders — to "Christianize" Palestine and make it this fictional "Christendom." Zionists want to transform the country into a Jewish state, and their relentless program is now focused on Jerusalem and strengthening the Jewish-only colonies built around it on Palestinian lands.

When the Crusaders were defeated, the Christian presence continued and actually flourished (my family members are descendants of Canaanites who converted to Christianity in the 3rd century and lived through that tumultuous era as Arab Eastern Christians). This begs the question of what will happen to Jews, whether indigenous Arab Jews or immigrant European Jews, if/when Zionism is defeated. The answer is not as dramatic as the Zionists like to imagine and plan for.

Let's just think of the potential outcomes of colonial/anti-colonial struggles. There are really only three: the indigenous win (e.g., Algeria) or largely lose by genocide (partial or complete), or reach a win-win or lose-lose situation in which both groups live in one shared country (e.g., South Africa). The latter is the most sensible outcome and also

happens to be the most common one, as over 100 countries have chosen it. There is no fourth scenario, and certainly no possibility of a "two state" division between colonizers and colonized (Qumsiyeh; *ibid.* 2004). The question is merely how to push and at what pace for this inevitable outcome. The answer is not in head-on collisions, but in popular resistance to actions (not hatred of people or revenge) and thus bolstering the popular resistance that leads to hope, empowerment and then liberation, which benefits everyone (see Qumsiyeh, 2010).

I moved from Palestine to the U.S. for my graduate degrees and then moved back in 2008. Since then I have lost 19 of my personal friends in the struggle. I have met thousands of people of diverse backgrounds and traveled to over 50 countries. This only emphasized to me the beauty of diversity, the mix of perceptions that are never really as binary as some people would like them to be. I noted that what divides us is for the most part usually artificial and mythological. Technological and information advances make for both great opportunities and great threats that are no longer local, but global (e.g. climate change and potential nuclear war). Perhaps these global threats can unite us to educate people more about the strengths of diversity and interdependence. Perhaps all we can do is try our best to create a ripple effect for a better, more peaceful world. Perhaps, as the old song says: in the end only kindness matters (Jewel, 1998). [ih](#)

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