

A Dialogue between a Muslim Man and an American Christian Woman

Part 2

By

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Omar's evenings were spent with Walker and Jennifer after their return from work. Along the days Omar was able to understand the nature of walker's life with Jennifer. Walker spent most of his time playing poker with three of his closest friends. They were heavy drinkers and heavy smokers. When being drunk and the bet was high, they produced lots of noise and shouting. Omar hated such poker sittings and usually withdrew to either his room or to the living room to watch TV. In order not to leave Omar alone, Jennifer frequently joined him. She was always dressed in very short skirts revealing her thighs and long legs, and open blouses revealing a large part of her breasts. Nudity in the American society seemed to be everywhere. Omar lowered his gaze, trying to keep his mind clear of sexual thoughts.

According to the Koran the ultimate success in the hereafter depends on Muslims' adherence to the branches of belief. Hayaa (bashfulness) is one of the branches of belief. Islam promotes Hayaa as a basic value in its social structure. Hayaa refers to the suppression of sexual behavior within certain limits and the avoidance of instigating sexual attraction beyond those limits. In Islam, Hayaa is one of the primary values, which besides a few other values provide the basis for not only moral behavior, but also a sound society. According to the Koran, Hayaa was the primary value that induced man to invent clothes to cover his private parts. The Koran while referring to the incident that took place between Adam and Eve, says:

And when they had eaten of the prohibited tree, their private parts became apparent to them and they started covering themselves with the leaves of the garden. (Al-Aa'raaf,7)

The Koran has given the minimum standard for the etiquette that should be observed between man and woman. When sitting in a mixed gathering, both the Muslim men as well as women should not try to lure someone from the opposite sex with their gazes. In other words, they should avoid staring at

each other in a suggestive way. While in a mixed gathering, both the Muslim men and women should wear dresses that adequately cover their private parts. Any dress that is revealing or that may in any way arouse sexual thoughts in the minds of any member of the opposite sex should be avoided.

The Koran directs women to guard their private parts. The Koran says:

O Prophet, tell these believing women (that when they interact in a mixed gathering) to turn their eyes away from temptation, to guard their private parts and not to display their adornments except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their step-sons, their brothers, their brother's sons, their sister's sons, their women servants and their slave girls; male attendants lacking in natural vigor and children who have no carnal knowledge of women. Moreover they should not stamp their feet while walking so as to bring to attention their hidden ornaments. (Al-Noor,31).

Allah also says in His Koran:

O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the women of the believers to draw upon them their over-garments. That is more appropriate so that they may be recognized and not molested. (Al Ahzab,59).

The prevalence of nudity in a society has a negative effect on Muslim's inherent value of Hayaa.

When gambling sittings began, or the TV programs were not to his liking, Omar always excused himself and resorted to his room. When Jennifer sat closer to him wearing clothes revealing a large part of her body, his face became redder than usual and he listened to her views with a blush. He never looked straight into her eyes, but rather lowered his gaze. To her he was a peculiar human specimen - a man coming from backwardness and unable to cope with modern civilization. A man sunk in old traditions hampering his intellect to adapt to the free world. However, his beauty and strength, piety and self-confidence, bashfulness and abstention from the temptations of life intrigued her tremendously. She was curious to show this perplexing puzzle that refrained from her food and dumbfounded her with proves and excuses, that he was nothing but a crushed remainder coming from decayed ages. She became curious about him, and her curiosity led her to search his room while he and Walker were visiting the Military Academy at West Point. The

moment she entered his room, she was faced by a strong odor of musk. This was the perfume he wore when praying. On a chair near his bed were a prayer mat and a chaplet. The Koran was carefully placed on the bedside table. It was not exactly a bedroom but a sanctuary where he took refuge away from the temptations of life. She even opened his cupboard and breathed the pleasant fragrance emanating from his suits; musk mingled with the scent of him.

Jennifer found herself comparing between Walker and Omar. They were totally different. Walker was living his life to the full, while Omar was living like a hermit abiding by Islamic laws. Walker drinks and smokes, While Omar prays five times a day and before each prayer he performs ablution by cleansing himself with pure water. Although she loved Walker and now they lived together, she knew that in his endless military missions he was cheating on her whenever he got the chance. These capricious relationships however didn't bother her so much because Walker always returned back to her. No strong commitment was there to join them together forever. Since she graduated from the university she lived for short periods with other men, so was Walker with other women. This was simpler, no obligations, no permanent ties, it's a free country.

While sitting with Omar watching TV, Jennifer addressed him saying, "How do you like American TV programs?"

With a frown on his face Omar said, "I have been watching TV for a while and I was amazed of what I saw. It was as if I were watching a grievous comedy. Apostasy has become blatant, having no fear of exposure. In an environment of hypocrisy plain falsehood is being peddled. Moral depravity is sold in TV under the name of art and openness. Perversion prevails arrogantly and openly day and night. I have seen in a TV program a man sitting between two women nearly nude, and a black woman with the audience asking him about what happened to his marriage. One woman was his wife and the other was his mistress. The wife said that she will get him back and the mistress said on my dead body. The man sitting in the middle said hugging them, 'I love them both.' What is this? Omar asked. Then he continued, 'Is this an admittance that this could easily happen in American houses? What would kids say when they see this? What is the media doing to the American family? This dashes to pieces the American family ties. Don't you think?"

Jennifer: "What you are describing here is known as "shock TV." They are shows deliberately made to shock and alarm the people watching them. The

guests on the shows are most often paid actors, again the Hollywood illusion. The audience is told they are real of course, but they are not most of the time. This started with what they called “shock radio” and then made its way to television. It was a phase of television programming that is slowly disappearing; people are tired of it, not so shocked anymore, and want something different. The children that watched these shows after school and before their parents were home will carry these ideas with them of course. TV shapes our reality in America. There are always people who will say, “At least I am not as bad as that guy!” as they watch the show. It does lesson our expectations of others and ourselves. Also, what will we watch instead? If this is boring now, and changing, what will replace it? The “reality” shows are popular now, and some of those are decadent as well, some are just frightening. The type of people depicted in the shows you described is at the bottom of the social class. We can laugh at them, because it could never happen to us. Of course it could, we just wouldn’t tell anybody. But it does happen more frequently to people in that social class, the uneducated, the very poor, the people of low intelligence. We have communities of such people in several states, they truly do exist. Their circumstances are dramatized and glamorized on these stupid TV shows.”

Omar: “Violence and sexual images are characteristics of today’s American television I am afraid. I read that 61% of All American TV programming contains violence. A child who watches three to four hours a day of none educational TV will see about 8,000 small-screen murders by the time he or she completes grade school. American children spend an average of 6 hours, 32 minutes each day watching TV or using other media including the Internet, videotapes, videogames and radio. That’s more time than they devote to any other activity except sleep. There are hundreds of studies showing a connection between violence on TV and its impact on children from aggressive behavior to sleep disturbances. While experts think that television can entertain and inform, many programs may have an undeniably negative influence on childhood behavior and values. Youngsters may become less sensitive to the terror of violence, accept violence as a way to resolve life’s difficulties, or even imitate the violence they have seen. In a study of more than 700 children, researchers found that adolescents who watch more than an hour a day of TV are more prone to aggression and violence once they reach their late teens and early 20s. It certainly isn’t true that every child who watches a lot of violence will become a school shooter, only a very tiny fraction of kids actually commit criminal violence. But even among these children who don’t, they may become more hostile, more desensitized, and more frightened. Here’s how the American Academy of

Pediatrics puts it: “Watching a lot of violence on television can lead to hostility, fear, anxiety, depression, nightmares, sleep disturbances, and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is best not to let your child watch violent programs and cartoons. As for sexual content on TV whether in dramatic programs, music videos, or commercials, experts caution that TV often doesn’t depict the negative outcomes of sexual behavior, such as unwanted pregnancies and sexual transmitted diseases, and that children may initiate what they see in order to feel older. By watching television, children often learn that sex is very casual, that it has no negative consequences, and that it’s cool to have sex.”

Omar asked Jennifer a question that was confusing him,” I heard the news that priests in the churches were sexually abusing children. How that could be? As it seems, priests in America have their own TV programs. I saw them preaching in a theatrical way far from veneration. The priest with long hair spreading over his shoulders, casually dressed, was preaching with shallow words and singing and dancing with a jazz band in the background. It was not a dignified preaching but rather a musical show. I think instead of guiding people he led them astray. The audience however seemed to believe him and looked impressed!”

“What you are describing here are two different things. A priest is of the Catholic faith. These are the church leaders who have been in the news so much for sexually abusing the children in their care. This can’t be only an American problem, but I guess I have not heard of it anywhere else. It happens because the priests are the leaders of the people, and do the thinking of the people, and the people submit to them. The parishioners do not think for themselves. They consider the priest to be next to God, only under the Pope in Rome. It has been long talked about that pedophiles, those with the inclination to abuse children in a sexual way, gravitate to the position of priest, just for that purpose. They will have power and control and will not be questioned. It is all hidden. Catholic churches are very ceremonial, very reverent in their own way. No longhair priests or jazz bands.

The priest with long hair that you described is a preacher, or a pastor or maybe a minister. These are not catholic priests. They are either of a Protestant denomination, or they are their own creation, not included with any others. Many such churches exist across America. One man’s philosophy becomes the whole teaching of the church. There is also a movement in Christianity called ‘charismatic.’ The charismatic Christians are very much involved with music during worship, even what they call ‘Christian Rock.’ I think people gravitate towards these church groups

because they want an audience for their music. They change the lyrics to ideas about God, and all of a sudden they are great Christians. No! But most churches are social clubs, and people want to have a good time at their social club.

They also 'pass the bucket' at these church meetings. A real bucket, such that you would put water in, is passed around the group to collect money for the church, which is of course the preacher. A good meeting will fill many buckets with cash. There is a room with people just counting the money. The money is whatever use the preacher says. The church gets a none-tax status with the government, so there aren't even any taxes on this money. It is not monitored. The church receives none-tax status because originally the church was to help the poor. When the government took over helping the poor, the none-tax status remained on the churches any way. Many, many people get certificates as a leader of a church, then get the none-tax status, and make their living in this way. All illusion, all nonsense, but they get many followers."

Many churches have their own television shows where the services are broadcast to a large audience. There are even television stations owned by churches and/or religious organizations. They say it is for the people who cannot make it into the church for whatever reasons; too old, too sick, etc. Both pull in great amounts of money from their viewing audiences. It is quite profitable for a church to have a TV show. The objection to this from the more traditional church leaders is that a church is intended to be a personal place of refuge for the members of the congregation. It is for members to commune and worship together, to help each other, and to work as a group to help others outside their church. To make church attendance merely a viewing of a television program makes all these important things obsolete."

A more traditional church will pass a collection plate, more dignified. Christians are to 'tithes' or give 10 percent of their earnings to the church. The collection plate is to collect 10 percent. This money is counted and reported for any member of the church to see. It pays the preacher and perhaps secretary a salary, all the bills to run the church, electricity, etc, and then whatever else the church votes to spend the money on. Of course the Biblical direction for use of the 10 percent includes taking care of widows and orphans and other unfortunates...but the churches do not do this. They absolutely do not do this.

The television shows declare that 10 percent is not nearly enough to give to God. They teach that the more you give to their church, the more you will receive back ten times more from God for whatever you send to them for God's work."

It is obvious that I am not a fan of organized religious anything. I encountered many victims of sexual abuse from persons in authority within the church, not only the Catholic Church, but from several different kinds of churches. I also encountered many persons who fell under the spell of a church leader who caused them to relinquish all they had to the church. This happens frequently. People are so empty, so lonely, and so desperate; they think they have to buy God's love."

Omar broke in, "You know Jennifer what Allah has said about rabbis and monks who devour the wealth of people in falsehood? He said:

"O believers, many of the rabbis and monks indeed devour the wealth of people in falsehood and hinder them from the way of Allah. Those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not expend them in the way of Allah, give them the tidings of a painful chastisement."

"There is another puzzling question Jennifer, you have a lot of shooting in schools. Why this phenomenon is so prevailing?" Omar further asked. "This is an important question. I will give you an explanation you might find interesting. The U.S. school system does not teach thinking skills, it teaches memorization of facts and ideas presented in approved text books which are often full of misinformation. A student who challenges an idea that has been approved by the local school board will find himself quickly in trouble. And as for teachers, who try to teach children to think for themselves, they find themselves in other professions rather quickly. I greatly admire the German school system for several reasons, one of which is that they actually receive credit in class for challenging the teacher to prove an idea or fact. Their debates about historical, social and political issues are fundamental for their learning process.

The arrogance of power permeates our society at all levels. It is especially strong in our high school systems, although not quite as strong in our universities. It is fed by our general culture, but also by different Christian religious groups. Please understand my point, Christianity does not teach such a thing, but some denominations have taken a strong stand on not including anyone who does not abide by their particular religious beliefs that

they made up as they went along, or even more subtle, the lead group in the school comprised of different religious persuasions, but with the common goal of being superior-arrogant.”

The school shootings we have so many of are an example of this. There are students who are shunned on a regular basis, in our great “educate all” school systems. They are treated with disrespect by other students and also by teachers and school administrators. These are not students of color usually, or of really different religions. I am speaking about mostly white middle income Americans in everyday life. These people do not see people of other races, nationalities and religions. It is like they have blinders on. The problems I am speaking about here, is when these same people do not see members of their own race, school, etc. There is a way of ignoring those you think are inferior, thus elevating the group to a higher status. It is being ignored; as if you don’t exist, that causes the retaliations because as human we must be acknowledged. If these students speak of their own personal rights, their own thoughts on religious matters, or speak anything that is not positive about the lead group, they are very much mistreated, and not only in the school, but also in the community. Many of these students move away, drop out of school or even kill themselves. But some, because these are intelligent young people with resources, such as working parents, they are able to plan retaliations. Their “rock throwing” however, is now using guns and bombs.”

These things are true and I have witnessed them with my own eyes, after my eyes were opened. Americans continue to question, “Why would these students do these things? What caused them to hate so much?” and they never realize they are part of the system that is causing this. They only continue to hate the students who fight back. They want them to disappear.”

Omar: “I see the connection here with Americans ignoring the Palestinians while supporting the Israelis. The Americans keep asking, ‘Why does the Muslim world hate us so much?’ They just cannot see themselves, and their country for what they are.”

Jennifer: “There is an expression, ‘You can’t see the forest because all the trees are in the way.’ I think it is like this for much of America. We do not even see other peoples in the world, just like in our culture; we do not see these students who are being violated daily. We only see the retaliation and then persecute them more because they dare to defend themselves. I am really just trying to say that this problem of arrogance is taught to us all from

an early age, and most of us never see it, and would never admit it could be true. So then, how is it possible to teach compassion to a society that believes it is totally compassionate already, when it actually has no compassion that doesn't better itself?"

Omar: "I understand what you said about the arrogance of power. Religious groups should not teach arrogance and superiority to students. Allah loves modesty, forgiveness, tolerance and justice. Strong people are those who acquire these characters."

Jennifer continued, "I just have to add more to this pattern of thought. I am of course not referring to all Americans, all across America. This is a huge country. But when you look at where the school violence occurs, it is in the middle part of America, excluding the west and east coasts. The communities enduring this school violence are upper middle income communities, not the inner city ghettos, or the rural communities. This isn't as much of a problem in the big cities, it is smaller towns. In towns in the middle of America, what we call the "Bible belt" the largest churches in the town have a lot of power. Although we in America pride ourselves on separation of church and state, it is an invisible line that separates the two. In fact, a preacher or minister of the largest congregation in town is looked to in a leadership role not only for that particular church, but also for community and school affairs. Because each individual church, even if part of a denomination, pushes for what is important to that minister or that preacher at that time, a church that is anti-alcohol, may truly regulate the laws in the community regarding the sale of alcohol. This is done indirectly of course, but very powerfully. If the church in the community decides a certain business establishment is against a church it will be soon out of business, again by indirect application of the power of the church members. I do not think those church leaders see themselves as anything but the Christian, loving mankind, persona they show to us. They don't see what is going on, or perhaps they really would change, but if they changed, they could not be the leaders of these communities, they would themselves be outcasts."

Many members of these large congregations are businessmen and their families, mostly interested in making business contacts in their communities. Many things done in the name of religion and spirituality, is a show, and the better the show, the more business someone will attract. It is really very powerful, and there is great incentive to belong to the most powerful congregation in a community."

In order to belong there must be outsiders. It all works together. Again, this has really nothing to do with Christianity, but more like an invisible social class system. If you do not belong to this particularly powerful church congregation, then you are automatically an outsider. Jobs, purchase of homes, business deals, dates of teenagers, many things will not come to pass if you are an outsider. It is all very subtle, and very quiet, and very real. It is the secrecy that makes it all so dangerous. It must be secret because the U.S. has many laws against discrimination of any kind. So when decisions are made in secret, it can be of any reason.”

It is of course best to be among the richest families in the congregation, because they wield the most power. Of course if you do not care about such things, they cannot harm you. You can keep pushing about the large group, but eventually you will give up and move on. But if you do care, and want to be accepted and are continually rejected, then the problems are big. Adults handle this in a certain way, but teenagers may handle it in a completely different way. Because the minister or the preacher and the congregation inadvertently control jobs, even teaching jobs, and teachers are part of the system as well as school administrators. This is why it is such a powerful dynamic in the schools. It is frequent, that where you attend church will determine if you are the applicant that gets a particular job, even a low paying job. This is done directly, of course, so it doesn't violate any U.S. laws regarding discrimination.”

The families in these churches are not all extremely wealthy, but some are. But even the children from the families that are not wealthy are never allowed to suffer. They have never wanted for anything in their lives. They are kept from hearing any evils of the world, or if they do, it is of no consequence because it is “those” people and not they. They do not learn compassion. It is common for these children, when learning of the holocaust for example, to make stupid jokes and laugh at everything. Not out of nervousness, but out of no feelings. The children, and the adults in the families, also do not have a real belief or relationship with God. The church is not really a place of worship, but a social club. It is all an act, what is expected of them. They are not deep thinking people, even though they may be professional and have many university degrees. They think only of themselves and their standing with the congregation, which is their community.”

So, because they are not really religious or spiritual people, arguments about God and godly principles fall on deaf ears. They do not know compassion

for the misfortunes of others because they have not experienced any real misfortunes themselves. Or if they have, they are alcoholics and drug users in private, all to numb their pain and to keep the bright and happy face to show to others.”

We are so affluent; even those here on the lower end of the economic scale, compared to the rest of the world. There is always food, always medical care, always help from the government, but not from the churches. The churches are in business seeking their own profits. They do not provide to the poor, except to make a show sometimes. The churches, a vast many, teach that religion will bring riches and every desire of your heart literally. Again, the teachings are of self-centeredness, and arrogance. Power corrupts. How do you teach a culture like this, full of arrogance and superiority and blind to problems of people close to them, to feel compassion for other peoples they do not believe they are connected to in any way? Peoples that are on the other side of the world, and matter not.”

To make clear my point in going on and on, I am attempting to explain the school violence, and how there can be so much oppression and hatred in one small group of students or an individual student, that they could bring guns to schools and indiscriminately start shooting their classmates. But if this oppression can go on in schools in small towns in America, not just one particular school, but many, many schools, it is intrinsic in our culture. If it is intrinsic in the culture of small town America, does it also exist in the culture of larger cities, in our government, in our politics? After all, our government leaders come out of small town America, so do our corporate executives, our university professors. Perhaps these people are not attending church anymore, or perhaps they are attending a godly church now, but how much of what they learned as children and teenagers affect the decisions they make as adults?”

Do you know that the history of the United States is full of arrogance, control and genocide? Even Hitler sent men to study the removal of the American Indians from their homelands, and their near extinction, before he began his quest to rid Germany of those he felt were not human enough. Oklahoma used to be called Indian Territory. It is the land that all Indian tribes across the U.S. were removed to when their beautiful wood homes and rich cultivated farmlands were stolen from them.”

Omar: “This frequent shooting in schools could also be due to the gun rights you have according to the second amendment.”

Jennifer: “The Second Amendment states, “A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be fringed.” The intent was to protect the right of the individual to own and use guns. American founders fought the Revolutionary War to throw off British tyranny. Most of the revolutionaries owned and used their own guns in that war. After the war, in 1789, the 13 American States adopted the constitution, creating the federal government. Before ratifying the constitution, the people demanded a Bill of Rights to prevent our government from depriving them of their liberties as the British had done. More than 50 million American citizens exercise their constitutionally protected right to keep and bear arms. Today, the right to own a gun is under assault like never before because of the high rate of crimes committed by gun owners, as well as frequent school shooting. Politicians are now calling for stricter gun regulation. On the other hand, gun owners believe there should be absolutely no compromise on the original intent of the Second Amendment. They believe that gun control is a direct assault on the very essence of being American, an assault on the second amendment of the constitution. They think they have the right to decide how best to protect themselves, their families, and their property. They want their constitutional rights protected, and to be treated under the law as the constitution requires. Several organizations are now formed to attack the government because they think it is trying to turn Americans into easy prey for criminals, into government-guaranteed unarmed victims. In Washington, gun owners fight now legislative battles to protect their gun rights.”