

MARC WILLIAMS, NEH SEMINAR: MUSLIM AMERICAN IDENTITIES

---

# HIP-HOP & ISLAM

**HIP-HOP IS A CULTURE.**

**DJING  
BREAKDANCING  
GRAFFITI  
EMCEEING**

**4 ELEMENTS OF HIP-HOP**

# ALI SHAHEED MUHAMMAD (A TRIBE CALLED QUEST, LUCY PEARL)





**“MY RELIGION IMPACTS ON MY CHARACTER, AND THE MESSAGE I TRY TO DELIVER TO PEOPLE — TO STAY CONNECTED TO REAL LIFE. AND ALSO MY RELIGION GIVES ME DISCIPLINE...”**

**I WANTED TO SHOW TO PEOPLE THAT, YES, I AM A MUSLIM, BUT I AM A DANCER, NOT A TERRORIST OR SOMETHING CRAZY.”**

**Lilou, a French Muslim of Algerian Descent and b-boy**



**MOHAMMED ALI AKA AEROSOL ARABIC**



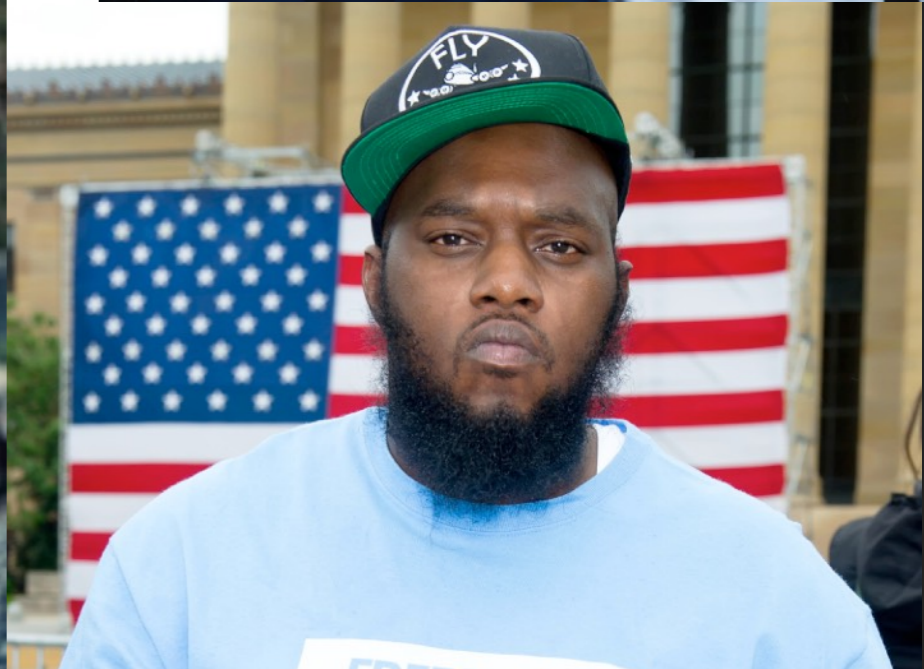
Kebeneran

كَلِمَاتِي فِي كَلِمَاتِهِ

الكلمة







# FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

---

- ▶ Shahada: declaration of faith
- ▶ Salah: obligatory prayer
- ▶ Zakat: alms-giving, charitable giving
- ▶ Sawm: fasting; Ramadan
- ▶ Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca

# GOALS OF SHARIA BASED ON INTERPRETATION

---

- ▶ Self-Improvement
- ▶ Justice Among All
- ▶ Public Interest
- ▶ Protection of Life, Faith, and Property
- ▶ Human Freedom
- ▶ Human Dignity
- ▶ Human Fraternity

**YOU CAN USE RAP SONGS TO TEACH  
AND LEARN ABOUT MULTIPLE AREAS  
OF ISLAM AND LIFE AS A MUSLIM.**

ALL OVER THE WORLD HEARTS POUND WITH THE RHYTHM  
FEAR NOT OF MEN BECAUSE MEN MUST DIE  
MIND OVER MATTER AND SOUL BEFORE FLESH  
ANGELS HOLD A PEN KEEP A RECORD IN TIME  
WHICH IS PASSING AND RUNNING LIKE A CARAVAN TRADER  
THE WORLD IS OVERRUN WITH THE WEALTHY AND THE WICKED  
BUT GOD IS SUFFICIENT IN DISPOSING OF AFFAIRS  
GUNMEN AND STOCKHOLDERS TRY TO MERIT MY FEAR  
BUT GOD IS SUFFICIENT OVER PLANS THEY PREPARED  
MOS DEF IN THE FLESH, WHERE YOU AT, RIGHT HERE  
ON THIS PLACE CALLED EARTH, HOLDING DOWN MY SQUARE

"Fear Not of Man" from *Black on Both Sides* (1999) Yasiin Bey (formerly known as Mos Def)

# ANGELS HOLD A PEN KEEP A RECORD IN TIME WHICH IS PASSING AND RUNNING LIKE A CARAVAN TRADER

---

- ▶ Could be referring to descriptions of the acts of angels (Kiraman Katibin)
  - ▶ “We created man—We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein—with two receptors set to record, one on his right side and one on his left: he does not utter a single word without an ever-present watcher.” (The Qur’an, Qaaf 50:16-18)
  - ▶ “Over you stand watchers, noble recorders who know what you do...” (The Qur’an, The Breaking 82:10-12)
- ▶ The Prophet Muhammad had experience as a caravan trader

**BLESSINGS COMING EVERYDAY  
WORKING HARD IN SO MANY WAYS  
PRAY 2 RAKATS OUT OF GRATITUDE  
CAUSE THAT COMES FIRST, IT DON'T GET DELAYED**

"On My Deen" from *Fajr EP (2017)* Deen Squad

# PRAY 2 RAKATS OUT OF GRATITUDE CAUSE THAT COMES FIRST, IT DON'T GET DELAYED

---

- ▶ *Rakat* is the process that Muslims follow when performing *Salah*
  - ▶ You can think of this as a unit of measurement with respect to performing *Salah*



NEFERTITI, NO DRAMA  
MAKE A FEMINIST PLANET  
WOMEN HATERS GET BANISHED  
COVERED UP OR NOT DON'T EVER TAKE US FOR GRANTED

"Hijabi (Wrap My Hijab)"(2017) Mona Haydar

# WOMEN HATERS GET BANISHED COVERED UP OR NOT DON'T EVER TAKE US FOR GRANTED

---

- ▶ Mona Haydar
  - ▶ Poet and activist from Flint Township, Michigan
  - ▶ ["Michigan Muslim woman's 'Hijabi' rap video catches fire online"](#)
- ▶ *Hijab* is sometimes worn to express commitment to Allah's call to modesty
  - ▶ Could also be worn as an identity statement

**S\*\*T THE GOVERNMENT'S AN ADDICT  
WITH A BILLION DOLLAR A WEEK KILL BROWN PEOPLE  
HABIT  
AND EVEN IF YOU AIN'T ON THE FRONT LINE  
WHEN MASSAH YELL CRUNCH TIME, YOU RIGHT BACK AT IT**

"Uncle Sam Goddamn" from *Undisputed Truth*  
(2007) Brother Ali

# S\*\*T THE GOVERNMENT'S AN ADDICT WITH A BILLION DOLLAR A WEEK KILL BROWN PEOPLE HABIT

---

- ▶ This song was released in 2007
  - ▶ United States is actively engaged in warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan
- ▶ How is Brother Ali creating a conversation regarding justice for all of humanity through this particular line within this particular song?

SEE THE ANGUISH OF THE PARENTS  
WHEN THEY'RE CARRYING THE BODY OF THE BABY THAT THEY  
CHERISH  
WHEN INNOCENT PEOPLE PERISH  
IT'S A VERY THIN LINE BETWEEN A SOLDIER AND A TERRORIST

"Mourning In America" from *Mourning In  
America And Dreaming In Color (2012)* Brother  
Ali

# WHEN INNOCENT PEOPLE PERISH IT'S A VERY THIN LINE BETWEEN A SOLDIER AND A TERRORIST

---

- ▶ Brother Ali is exploring the perception of a soldier/terrorist, war/terrorism.
- ▶ Why is Brother Ali comparing these concepts in the same line?

THE INK OF A SCHOLAR  
IS WORTH A THOUSAND TIMES MORE  
THAN THE BLOOD OF A MARTYR....  
SHORTY AIN'T LEARNED TO WALK, ALREADY HEAVILY ARMED  
CIVILIANS AND LITTLE CHILDREN IS ESPECIALLY HARMED  
CAMOUFLAGED TORAHS, BIBLES, AND GLORIOUS QUR'ANS  
THE BOOKS THAT TAKE YOU TO HEAVEN  
AND LET YOU MEET THE LORD THERE  
HAVE BECOME MISINTERPRETATED [SIC] REASONS FOR  
WARFARE

"American Terrorist featuring Matthew Santos" from  
*Lupe Fiasco's Food & Liquor (2006)* Lupe Fiasco

# THE INK OF A SCHOLAR IS WORTH A THOUSAND TIMES MORE THAN THE BLOOD OF A MARTYR...

---

- ▶ This line could be from a *Hadith* (reports that describe the actions, words, or habits of the Prophet Muhammad)
  - ▶ possibly from a *Al-Jaami' al-Saghîr* by Imam al-Suyuti (1445-1505)
    - ▶ Imam al-Suyuti says this is a "weak" (*Da'if*) *Hadith*
      - ▶ different categories of *Hadith*
        - ▶ *Sahih*: sound
        - ▶ *Hasan*: good
        - ▶ *Da'if*: weak
        - ▶ *Mawdu*: fabricated



SO THROUGH THE GRIM REAPER SICKLE SHARPENING  
MACINTOSH MARKETING  
OIL FIELD AUGURING  
BRAZILIAN ADOLESCENT DISARMAMENT  
ISRAELI OCCUPATION  
ISLAMIC MARTYRDOM, PRECISE  
YEAH, LASER GUIDED TARGETING  
OIL FOR FOOD BARTERING, TERRORIST ORGANIZATION HARBORING  
SAND CAMOUFLAGE ARMY MEN  
CCF SPONSORING, WORLD CONQUERING, TELEPHONE MONITORING  
LOUIS VUITTON MODELING, PORNOGRAPHIC ACTRESS HONORING  
STRING THEORY PONDERING, BULIMIC VOMITING  
CATHOLIC PRIEST FONDLING, PREEMPTIVE BOMBING  
AND OSAMA AND OBAMA IN THEM  
THEY BREAKING IN MY CAR AGAIN, DEFORESTATION AND OVERLOGGING AND  
HENNESSY AND HYPNOTIQ SWALLOWING, HYDROPONIC COUGHING AND  
ALL THE WORLD'S ILLS, SITTING ON CHROME 24-INCH WHEELS, LIKE THAT

"Hurt Me Soul" from *Lupe Fiasco's Food & Liquor*  
(2006) Lupe Fiasco \*Lupe says "astaghfirullah" at the  
beginning of the song, which means "Allah forgive  
me."

# POTENTIAL ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

---

- ▶ How has Islam added to the culture of Hip-Hop?
  - ▶ Think of the 4 Elements of Hip-Hop culture
- ▶ With the insertion of Islamic teachings in rap, how has the writing style of rap music been affected?
- ▶ How have Muslims been able to more observably add their perspectives into "mainstream" rap music?
- ▶ Can the presence of Muslims and Islamic practices contribute to more positive, productive, and peaceful interactions within hip-hop culture?

# SOURCES

---

- ▶ [Red Bull Lilou B-Boy](#)
- ▶ [Amirah Sackett Breakdancing Muslim Woman](#)
- ▶ [Mohammed Ali Aerosol Arabic](#)
- ▶ [Yasiin Bey "Fear Not of Man" lyrics](#)
- ▶ [Deen Squad "On My Deen" lyrics](#)
- ▶ [Brother Ali "Uncle Sam Goddamn" lyrics](#)
- ▶ [Brother Ali "Mourning In America" lyrics](#)
- ▶ [Lupe Fiasco "American Terrorist" lyrics](#)
- ▶ [Hadith Reference Ink of the Scholar, Blood of the Martyr](#)
- ▶ [Categories of Hadith](#)
- ▶ [Lupe Fiasco "Hurt Me Soul" lyrics](#)