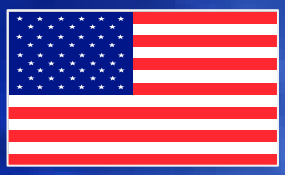
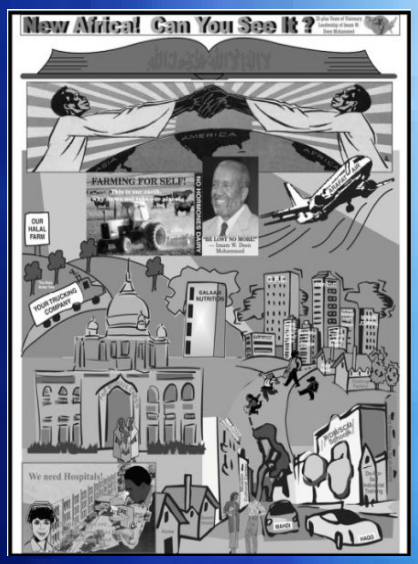
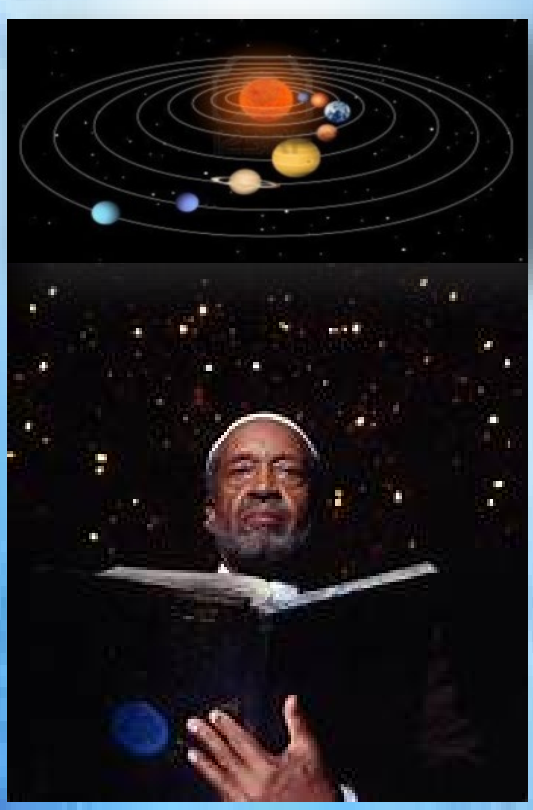


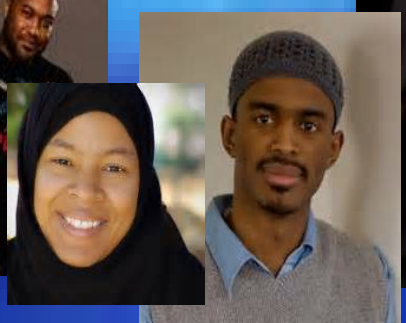
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Establishing

"Islamic Democracy"







Establishing *"Islamic Democracy"*

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to initiate a discussion within the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed on the obligation to further develop and establish *Islamic Democracy* to facilitate the natural process of self governance. This paper will explore theQur'anic foundations, principles, current practices and future challenges of developing our community life through *Islamic Democracy,* following the thinking of Imam Mohmmed.

Over the last two years, in conjunction with the"*Community Leadership Summit"* activities*,* the Section Conveners met on five occasions in four sections of the country (South, Southwest, Midwest and West) to initiate discussions and receive input from a number of believers, including local and national community leaders. While there were anarray of topics and issues discussed, this paper is a by-productof some of those discussions. It also represents follow-up research and input from sectional focus groups.

It is anticipated that this paper will be circulated to Imams and local communities for review and additional input through our existing shuraa process. Other community leaders and believers are also encouraged to give input. Questions, comments, and feedbackcan be directed to the Section Conveners (identified below) or posted on the community website: ***iwdmcommunity.com.***

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Summary

In the Qur'an (3:104), Allah establishes a direction for the believers to move from individuals practicing faith to the discipline and challenge of establishing a model Islamic community life. In the life of our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), this transition took place with the *hijrah* from Mecca to Medinah Munawwarah (city of enlightenment). In the last decade of his mission, Muhammad the Prophet (pbuh) undertook the challenge of developing the Islamic *ummah,* creating a model community life for the believers while including and respecting the rights of non-Muslims in the society.

In that tradition, Imam W. Deen Mohammed taught for thirty-three years (1975-2008) on the necessity of developing and establishing Islamic community life and *creating model Muslim communities.* For those of us that have been on a near century journey of faith in America, Allah has brought us "*from stage to stage" (Qur'an 84:19).* At this point in our inspired journey, Allah has brought us to the stage of collective self-governance. ***Islamic Democracy*, as our Imam W. Deen Mohammed pointed us to, is the vehicle for that self-governance.**

Governance is the process of shaping the decisions that influence the direction of a body or group. Government is a formal body invested with the authority to make decisions in a specific political system. Governance is a process while government is a social institution. Governance applies to all forms of community life both informal and formal, including family, tribe, community, organization, country, or society.

Governance in Al-Islam may take a variety of forms. *Islamic Democracy* based upon "*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum"* represents the highest and most advanced form of governance. However, before *Islamic Democracy*can be developed in the community or society, basic foundation principles and practices must be established. These include: **Authority; Accountability; Diversity; AmruhumShuraaBaynahum; Freedom of Speech; Transparency/Openness; Standards; Justice and Conflict Resolution; Responsiveness; and Progressiveness.**

Al-Islam is a way of life that also recognizes **leadership is a critical and natural function of community life.**In a democratic governance system different leadership styles may be necessary depending on the type of organizational structure or circumstance. **In an Islamic representative governance system the*Democratic/Servant Leader*emerges as the best style.**

The role of the ***Democratic/Servant Leader***in Al-Islam is to follow the guidance of the Qur'an, example of the Prophet, and work respectfully with other *Servant Leaders* to humbly serve the interests of the community. Recognizing that this leadership serves at the will of the community, the leader(s) **must use the tools of enlightened discussion, debate, and persuasion to convince a majority of peers or constituents to support his/her/their position**. In this role, the *Servant Leader* does not dictate or make all the decisions for the community but guides the community through an Islamic decision making process (i.e. shuraa).

Currently, the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed reflects a natural progression relative to governance models at the local, sectional (regional), and national levels. The elements of *Islamic Democracy* exist in a variety of forms at all three levels of community life.

Current local models of governance include incorporated non-profit organizations in the form of masajid, Islamic Centers, or other Islamic organizations. Non-profit organizations are required to register with and must be accountable to each state. These entities also utilize standard processes in order to function and conduct business. In accordance with the instruction of Imam W. Deen Mohammed, **local masajid and centers operate autonomously in accordance to their own governance practices.**

Reflection on the current situation at the local level reveals **several areas for improvement and continued community development**. One example is the fact that there are some communities where the bylaws either are outdated, not available, or are unknown to the common believers. If those bylaws are not up to date or are not widely known to the local community it is recommended that they be revised and brought up to date with the input of the community of believers. The local shuraa process and elections of officers, including Imams, are essential elements defined by the organization bylaws. Also, local Imams should act in the role of the *Servant Leader* serving the interests of the community at the will of the community.

The next level of governance for the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed is the section (region). Currently, within the community there are seven geographic sections (regions): New England; Northeast; Mid-Atlantic; South; Southwest; Midwest; and West. Each section has its own unique characteristics and is in a different stage of development.

At this level there are several organized efforts including Imams, Islamic organizations, and Sectional Leadership Teams. In all seven sections, Imams are organized and have **elected Section Conveners**.

The Imams and their **shuraa process** within the section allow for the movement of information or concerns from the local masjid or Islamic Center to the section level. Ideally, local Imams represent the thinking or positions of their respective communities. As a result, the Section Convener can represent the thinking or position of Imams and communities within the section.

A promising outcome of the sectional and national shuraa process among Imams is the **development of Islamic arbitration options** at the sectional level. This process came about as a way to provide disputing parties within local communitiesthe option of Islamic arbitration as opposed to expensive and sometimes embarrassing litigation through the public court system. Another recent development within one section, with the possibility of replication in others, is the creation of **regional leadership teams**. The leadership team model includes Imams and other leaders of expertise that work throughout the year on the critical areas of community development.

Areas for on-going attention and improvement at the section level include the **continued development of leadership teams and increased involvement of local Imamsin the sectional shuraa.** In order for the community to fully realize improved governance through *Islamic Democracy*, Imams must stay involved and engaged in the sectional shuraa. This involvement is critical to the continued development of the community. It ensures the maximum input and integrity of the collective decision making process. Sectional shuraa of Imams and leadership teams can also benchmark each other to identify areas of exceptional development that can be shared through progressive learning, and on-going improvement.

The community has a diverse array of national leaders and organizations. This includes Imams organized through the Section Conveners and a number of organizations and their leadersaddressing the many areas of community need and development.

The seven Section Conveners of Imams provide a national forum for the shuraa process for Imams, local masajid, Islamic centers, and concerned believers. The Conveners also

try to address issues of national or international concern that may impact the community. Within the last three years, the Conveners have developed several **initiatives that promote community development and improve communication**. These include national Imams' meetings; *Community Leadership Summits*; developing and maintaining a community website; and the publication of major community announcements.

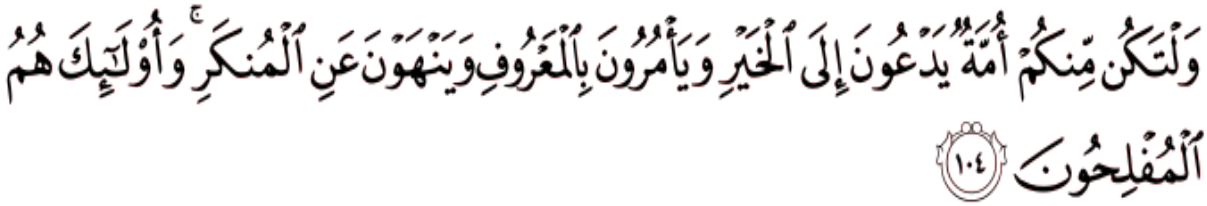
The challenge moving forward for the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed is to identify ways and vehicles for the diverse leadership of the community to communicate, work together, make decisions, and hold ourselves accountable.

Leaders and others representing the community nationallyshould be authorized through a democratic process and must be held to the expectation of the responsibility to report-back, submit themselves to questions, get feed-back, and to take shuraa with key stakeholders of the community.These leaders must also be held accountable to democratically developed community standards. Any individual is free to represent themselves, their masjid, or Islamic organization. However, **true community representation is authorized only through the process of *Islamic Democracy.***

Over the last five years, the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed has made amazing progress in naturally developing a unique model of *Islamic Democracy*. At all levels of community life, elements of *Islamic Democracy* are starting to take root. **As this community continues to evolve and refine the elements of our current local, sectional, and national governance models, a *world-class model of Islamic Democracy* will emerge that will represent the excellence of our human nature.**

*"…So this is how it works. **The whole, all important parts work together for the success of the whole. And this is a true democracy**, when all the people are included in shaping and promoting or directing of the interests of the community. That makes for a **truedemocracy**." (Imam W. Deen Mohammed, "Conversation in Boston, Support Religion for Social Dignity and Community Empowerment," March 14, 2008)*

Developing Our Community Life



*"Let there be from you a **community** inviting to the goodness/prosperity; ordering on the principles and exemplifying universally recognized human excellence; preventing the influences that void the human nature. Those, they will be the successful." (Qur'an 3:104)*

In the Qur'an, Allah establishes a direction for the believers to move from individuals practicing faith to the discipline and challenge of establishing a model Islamic community life. In the life of our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), this transition took place with the *hijrah* from Mecca to MedinahMunawwarah (city of enlightenment). In the last decade of his mission, Muhammad the Prophet (pbuh) undertook the challenge of developing the Islamic *ummah,*creating a model community life for the Believers while including and respecting the rights of non-Muslims in the society.

In that tradition, Imam W. Deen Mohammed taught for thirty-three years (1975-2008) on the necessity of developing and establishing Islamic community lifeand *creating model Muslim communities*for those of us that undertook the journey of faith in America. In conjunction with those teachings he consistently promoted the. Referring the elements of community life metaphorically as the *"four birds,"*Imam Mohammed cited four critical areas for the development of society and community. These included business and economic development, education, culture, and government.

Each of these critical institutions of community life requires a specialization of effort. These efforts result in like-minded people devoting themselves to organize and pursue Islamic models consistent with the Qur'anic principles of human excellence. Imam W. Deen Mohammed identified two areas of development relative to government, external and internal.

Externally, we have an obligation to fully participate in the governance of the larger society. This includes actively engaging in all levels of our American government (i.e. local, state, and federal). In doing so we must be informed on the issues; organize and advocate for an agenda; invest in our agenda; vote; and get others to vote consistently; participate

as community volunteers and elected officials; and communicate with and hold our elected officials accountable. This active engagement is the life blood of American democracy.

As we hold others accountable through the democratic governance process of this country, we also have an obligation as Muslims to **establish model governance systems** for others to emulate (i.e. "*ordering on the principles and exemplifying universally recognized human excellence"*). Imam W. Deen Mohammed pointed us to develop model self governance systems with the principles and practices of ***Islamic Democracy***. For over three decades, Imam Mohammed consistently urged our community to establish this practice at all levels of community life. Examples of his statements include:

> ***"There is in Al-Islam the best form of democracy…"*** *(Historic Atlanta Address, November 9, 1978)*
>
> *"…I believe that* ***Islamic democracy*** *is the situation we need if we are to really progress is America." (Progressions Magazine, November, 1985)*
>
> *"…Our most urgent instrument is* ***Muslim democracy****." (Muslim American Leadership Training Manual)*
>
> *"****This is a democratic religion.*** *It invites to the most democratic idea. I can't think of one other that is more democratic in my view of democracy.* ***Islam is to bring us to a participatory democracy****…" ("Islam's Climate for Business Success," 1995)*
>
> *"…So this is how it works.* ***The whole, all important parts work together for the success of the whole. And this is a true democracy****, when all the people are included in shaping and promoting or directing of the interests of the community. That makes for a* ***truedemocracy****." ("Conversation in Boston, Support Religion for Social Dignity and Community Empowerment," March 14, 2008)*

For those of us that have been on a near century journey of faith in America, Allah has brought us "*from stage to stage" (Qur'an 84:19).* At this point in our inspired journey, Allah has brought us to the stage of collective self-governance. ***Islamic Democracy*****, as our Imam W. Deen Mohammed pointed us to, is the vehicle for that self-governance.**

Governance, Al-Islam, and Democracy

*"**So the greatest development and object of man's intellectual growth is governmental order.** It actually doesn't stop with law, but when there is trust in society."(IWDM, Interview, Al-Qalam, April, 1981)*

Governance is the process of shaping the decisions that influence the direction of a body or group. Government is a formal body invested with the authority to make decisions in a specific political system. Governance is a process while government is a social institution. Governance applies to all forms of community life both informal and formal, including family, tribe, community, organization, country, or society.

Al-Islam defines a hierarchy of universal governance beginning with Allah the Creator. In this hierarchy, the ultimate sovereignty is with Allah. All power and ownership originates with Allah. Central to Muslim belief, Allah bestows power and authority upon His creation. As a result, Allah manifests this bestowed authority in the natural governing systems of the creation and in the life of man.

In the world of man, this natural governance manifests in two forms: 1) the *fitra-llahi(natural pattern which Allah created man on, i.e. Allah's universal principles found in creation, Qur'an 30:30)*, and 2) *the revealed word and guidance from Allah* (represented by scripture to mankind). Muslims are taught that both of these*ayaat* (signs) are sources of guidance for the governance of mankind.

Islamic belief also recognizes that Allah has granted man the special gifts of *free will*,*reason,* and *consciousness*. These special blessings allow human beings to think, question, learn, innovate, evolve our thinking, and change our behavior. When we examine the potential and power of the individual and collective consciousness, we see human beings sharing and expanding knowledge among ourselves and passing the expanded knowledge to future generations. This is part of the dynamism of the human nature. This collective consciousness of man's expanding knowledge serves to facilitate his life and guide man through time. This dynamic of the evolving collective consciousness of the human nature represents a dimension of the *fitra-llahi (natural pattern which Allah created man on)*.

Qur'anic guidance compels the believer to recognize and respectthis sacred aspect of the human nature when *ordering or directing* our affairs (i.e. self governance). Commenting on the Qur'anic concept of "*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum" (Qur'an 42:38),* Imam W. Deen Mohammed said: *"G-d says to us,***'*Order upon the principle of Shuraa, of mutual***

consultation…' *This is a meeting of the minds, the mutual meeting of the best minds, discussing the matter and coming up with a consensus, a judgment they all support. Right? That's what G-d says to do…"*The Islamic principle of "*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum"* is built upon the reality of the collective consciousness in the human nature. It also recognizes the natural development and dynamism of community life.

*Islamic Democracy*is built around the core principle of "*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum*."The word *democracy* comes from the Greek "*demokratia" (demos-people, kratos-power or rule),*meaning*"rule of the people."* While Muslims believe all sovereignty originates and belongs to Allah,the principle of "*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum"* represents Allah's gift of limited self-governance.In exercising this gift of self governance, Allah wants man to practice the concept of *"Taqwa"(consciousness of Allah's direction and guidance as we conduct our affairs).*

Islamic Democracy also represents a natural progression in the governance of human life. As human life evolves naturally from family, group, tribe, community, society, nation to global community, the nature and form of both governance and leadership also evolves. No matter where people are on this continuum of time and collective life, Allah reminds us that the principle of mutual consultation in the conduct of our affairs is prescribed. Allah also reminds the leaders of the group that **one-man rule or dictatorship is prohibited**. This even applies to the prophets. Muhammad the Prophet (pbuh) was the best example of this leadership, both submitting himself to the commands of Allah and seeking consultation with knowledgeable and respected leaders of the people in those affairs outside of direct revelation.

As a result of this excellent example, governance in Al-Islam may take a variety of forms. *Islamic Democracy* based upon "*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum"* represents the highest and most advanced form of governance. However, before *Islamic Democracy*can be developed in the community or society, basic foundation principles and practices must be established.

Islamic Democracy Principles

The process of developing *Islamic Democracy* in a community or society does not happen spontaneously. It must be naturally cultivated over time. As a result, before *Islamic Democracy* can take root in a community, basic foundation principles must be established. These include: **Authority; Accountability; Diversity; AmruhumShuraaBaynahum; Freedom of Speech; Transparency/Openeness; Standards; Justice and Conflict Resolution; Responsiveness; and Progressiveness.**

Authority

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِي ٱلۡأَمۡرِ مِنكُمۡۖ فَإِن تَنَٰزَعۡتُمۡ فِي شَيۡءٖ فَرُدُّوهُ
إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱلرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمۡ تُؤۡمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيۡرٞ وَأَحۡسَنُ تَأۡوِيلًا ٥٩

*"O you who have believed, **obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you**. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best and most suitable for final determination." (Qur'an 4:59)*

As previously stated, Islamic thought and belief is very clear on the hierarchy of authority in both the Creation and society of mankind. **Allah** is the originator, sustainer, guardian evolver, and sovereign authority of the entire Creation, which includes humanity. Allah is the ultimate reality and authority for humanity and society. For believers,our purest and most direct connection with the will and guidance of Allah comes from the Divine Revelation (Qur'an) to Muhammad the Prophet (pbuh). Study, understanding, and submission to the word, criteria, and guidance of Allah (Qur'an),are essential elements of Muslim community life.

The next level of authority for believers is the human recipient and manifestation of Divine Revelation (Qur'an), **Muhammad the Prophet (pbuh)**. This includes his life example *(uswah)* and *sunnah*(teachings and practices). These additional sources serve as guidance and insight for all believers on the *how to live the Qur'an*, both for the individual and society.

The third source of recognized authority for Muslim society are ***"those in authority among you"*** *(Qur'an 4:59).* This Qur'anic reference has rich meaning and can be

applied to the full continuum of governance systems for humanity. In the context of the life of Muhammad the Prophet and his successors it meant those recognized leaders in the Muslim society, including the Prophet and those appointed by him. Subsequent to the time of the Prophet, it authorized and guided the leaders of the Muslim *ummah* as it developed in different countries and cultures. This reference also includes recognized leaders such as Imams, other leaders, and elected representatives of contemporary Muslim democracies. The concept of *democracy (rule of the people)*implies that*authority also lies in the will and consent of the people* of the society. In the context of this ayat, Allah extends authority to the believers (i.e. *"authority among you").* This concept is manifest in the practice of *bay'ah (oath of allegiance)* where the leader of a Muslim community seeks the public consent, support, and allegiance of the people or their representatives. In an *Islamic Democracy* this consent is given through the process of elections of representatives or leaders.

Accountability

"…And ***we have to hold each other accountable. How come we don't hold each other accountable****?.. (IWDM, Midwest Shuraa Meeting, October 12,1997)*

A corollary principle to Authority is Accountability. Believers and leaders of the Muslim community must be accountable to the three sources of authorityoutlined in the Qur'an (4:59): **Allah** (including the *furqan* of the Quran); **the Deen** (including the obligations, practices, and sacred traditions of the Muslim life-as demonstrated in the life of Muhammad the Prophet, pbuh; and manifested in the *Deenul-fitr* or *fitra-iiahi*); **and the community of believers.**

Accountability to **Allah** is clearly the ultimate reality for all human beings. Believers, including their leaders are given clear guidance, standards and criteria *(furqan)* in the Qur'an. Believers understand that this accountability to Allah comes on the*Day of Judgment*, when their actions and intentions will be measured against these criteria.While only Allah knows our intentions, Muslims and their leaders are responsible to know and understand the standards of behavior outlined in the Qur'an for believers. In the example and spirit of Muhammad the Prophet, Muslim

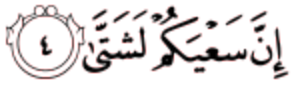
leaders are also held to a higher standard and are expected to exemplify, in their thinking and behavior, the *furqan* of the Quran and *uswah* of the Prophet.

The second area of accountability for believers and leaders is to **the Deen** (including the obligations, practices, and sacred traditions of the Muslim lifeas demonstrated in the life of Muhammad the Prophet, pbuh). The *Deen of Al-Islam* is not only faith and belief, it encompasses the entire life of the believer, including observing the *five fundamental obligations (i.e.Iman/Shahadah, Salat, Zakat, Saum in Ramadan, and Hajj)*. While these obligations are cited in the Qur'an, they were clearly exemplified in the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). As a result, the *uswah and sunnah* of the Prophet becomes a standard of accountability for Muslims.

Another element of the Deen is the *"fitra-llahi"* which includes the natural principles that govern the soul and human nature. As Muslims establish democratic governance systems the natural aspirations that Allah has placed in the human nature must be respected. As a result, the system of *Islamic Democracy* must promote human aspiration and excellence and respect basic human rights. The realities of aspiration and striving for excellence imply moving "*from stage to stage,"* therefore the governing system has to evolve to meet the needs of the changing human reality.

Finally, believers have an obligation to *establish community life(Qur'an 3:104)*. In addition to the criteria associated with this obligation *(inviting to the goodness/prosperity; ordering on the principles and exemplifying universally recognized human excellence; preventing the influences that void the human nature)*, believers have obligations to each other and to the community of Muslims. These standards are clearly delineated in the Qur'an and life of Muhammad the Prophet. In conjunction with these standards, Muslim communities and societies have the right to create additional laws to insure the peace, develop the society, and to protect the people in a changing social dynamic. As a result, believers are **accountable to each other and to the society of Muslims**.

Diversity (of Community Life)



"Indeed your efforts are diverse." (Qur'an 92:4)

One of the principlecomponents of the *fitra-llahi(natural pattern which Allah created man on)* is *diversity.* Diversity of life is evident at all levels of creation, including the human nature and our community life. In the community life of man, diversity manifests itself in a variety of ways including **demography, culture/lifestyles, thoughts/opinions, interests, specialization of effort, leadership,** etc. Recognition and inclusion of this natural diversity is essential in any human governance system. Modern democracies throughout the world have learned that without a balanced diversity reflective and representative of the society included in the governing system, the social order will begin to become unstable and ultimately break down.

Demographic diversity is manifested in gender, age, and ethnicity. Societies have historically struggled with demographic equity and justice. In addition to demographic diversity, societies also reflect different lifestyles and sub-cultures. As a result, Islamic governance systems must understand, respect, include, and represent, the basic elements of social diversity. Ideally, the system should be reflective of demographic balance. Specifically, special efforts must be made to include historically excluded and/or under-represented segments of the population (i.e. women, younger leaders, and ethnic minorities) in the governance system.

Diversity of **thought and opinion** is a fundamental reality of human life and a critical element in democratic governance systems. Allah has given man free will, intellect, and reason as a part of the human nature. These faculties result in an evolving social dynamic. Another aspect of the human nature is a difference of opinion based upon different experiences, approaches, and philosophies. A cornerstone of democracy is working in a respectful way to find common ground among the diversity of thinking and opinions of honorable and right-minded people.

Democratic governance systems must also be inclusive of the many **interests** that manifest in a society. These natural variations lead to complementary and interdependent aspirations of people in the society. These interests manifest themselves socially, economically, and politically. As these interests become institutionalized they result in a **specialization of effort**. This specialization of effort is necessary for societies to function. It results in the many complementary aspects of community life. It also means that developed communities are complex entities with many interests, organizations, and entities.

Finally, it is important to note that diversity also applies to **leadership** and leadership styles.Allah is the *"Rabbil-Al-Amin" (The Guardian Evolver, Sustainer, and Nurturer of life through every stage of development and all systems of knowledge).* Muslims believe that Allah moves humanity through different eras providing prophets, messengers, and leaders to nurture our development. At different stages of human development different leaders and leadership styles may be necessary to address different challenges. The *prophets/messengers*and *mujaddids (renewers of faith/religion)* represent the obvious exception because they are directly chosen by Allah for a specific mission at a specific point in human history. After the prophets and mujaddids, other leaders (including Imams) represent a variety of leadership styles, each of which is drawn from a number of leadership characteristics and traits. Theleadership continuum includes many suchstyles. Some of them include: *Dictatorial; Authoritarian/Directive; Paternalistic; Charismatic/Visionary; and Democratic/Servant Leader*.

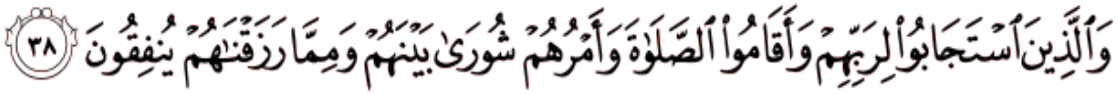
In a democratic governance system different leadership styles may be necessarydepending on the type of organizational structure or circumstance. For example, in a military or law enforcement organization the *Authoritarian/Directive*leadership style is necessary. In a business organization or application there may be several styles that are utilized which include the *Authoritarian/Directive, Paternalistic, Charismatic/Visionary,* or *Coaching.***In an Islamic representative governance system the*Democratic/Servant Leader*emerges as the best style.**

The role of the ***Democratic/Servant Leader***in Al-Islam is to follow the guidance of the Qur'an, example of the Prophet, and work respectfully with other Servant

Leaders to humbly serve the interests of the community. Recognizing that this leadership serves at the will of the community, the leader(s)**must use the tools of enlightened discussion, debate, and persuasion to convince a majority of peers or constituents to support his/her/their position**. This leadership style is also compatible with the *Charismatic/Visionary*leader which is also needed at different points in time to change course or direction of the community/society or to rally the community to higher levels of performance.

As mentioned above, developed communities are complex entities with many interests, organizations, and entities. A natural outgrowth of these entities is a diversity of leadership, leaders, and leadership styles to give direction to these entities. It is also important to understand that the word*leader* is not synonymous with *dictator or boss*.Also, Al-Islam is a way of life that recognizes **leadership is a critical and natural function of community life.**

AmruhumShuraaBaynahum



*"And those who have responded to their Guardian Evolver and established prayer and **order their affairs upon the principle of mutual consultation(ShuraaBaynahum)** and from what we provided them, they spend." (Qur'an 42:38)*

As previously stated, the principle of *AmruhumShuraaBaynahum* represents the core practice of an *Islamic Democracy*. This principle of ordering the affairs based upon mutual consultation has many applications [i.e. Informal: interpersonal, situational; and Formal: organizational, community (local, regional, national, international, global)]. For purposes of this discussion we will focus on the *formal/community* application of *AmruhumShuraaBaynahum.*

In exploring this principle, we need to: 1) clearly define the terminology, and 2) identify the elements of the principle. There are at least five elements that are critical to the application of*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum*. These include:

Qualifications, Representation, Participation/Engagement, Process, and Objective.

In defining the term, there are three ideas associated with"*AmruhumShuraaBaynahum*." The first word***"Amruhum"*** (a noun "Amru" derived from the Arabic verb"*Amara"*) means *command, authority, order,matter, or affair.* The suffixed possessive pronoun *"hum"* means "*their."* Thus the translation***"order their affairs."***The two remaining words ***"ShuraaBaynahum"***mean*"consultation between/among themselves"* or ***"mutual consultation."*** As a result, ***"AmruhumShuraaBaynahum"*****means a process of deliberation among representatives, knowledgeable, or concerned parties to try to find common ground or "consensus" in order to determine a course of action that will affect themselves and those they represent (i.e. the larger group or community).**

The formal application of *Shuraa*in Al-Islam requires individuals to be ***qualified*** or prepared to undertake the deliberation process. They should have the right intentions; be knowledgeable of the subject matter; be known to have good character and integrity; and have the right disposition. Disposition in this context involves the necessary ability to work together with others to reach a majority consensus or compromise.

Inherent in the idea of *Shuraa* and *Islamic Democracy* is ***representation***. A common element in both the Sunnah of the Prophet and modern democracies is the concept of representation. As communities evolve to become larger, more specialized and complex, *Islamic Democracy* is most efficiently facilitated when the larger body of people elect (or select) representatives to conduct the official affairs of the group or community. This is one of the most important elements of a governance system because the integrity of the entire system usually centers on the process of elections/selection and the resulting abilities of the representatives to work together for the common good of the larger group or community. As we discussed earlier, the representatives should also reflect the diversity of the larger group.

In addition to representation, ***participation and engagement*** in the Shuraa process are also important. These concepts start with the election/selection process. The modern concept of democracy reflects broad participation and engagement of the body of people in the community or society. The greater the participation of those electing the representative(s), the stronger the governing mandate of the representative(s). Imam W. Deen Mohammed commented: *"…So this is how it works. The whole, all important parts work together for the success of the whole. And this is a true democracy,* ***when all the people are included in shaping and promoting or directing of the interests of the community****. That makes for a true democracy."*

The second element of participation and engagement lies with the representatives themselves. Representatives must engage in the governing process for *ShuraaBaynahum* to work. Sectional Conveners of Imams have the responsibility to provide on-going opportunities for input and deliberation for Imams in their Sections. Imams and/or other elected representatives must give voice to the concerns of their communities through participation in their Sectional shuraa councils.Failure to participate in the sectional shuraa process renders the local community and/or population without representation or a voice in decisions that impact the larger community. Similarly, local Imams, acting in the roles of *Servant Leaders* must engage their communities in the process of shuraa to receive input on critical local, sectional, or national issues.

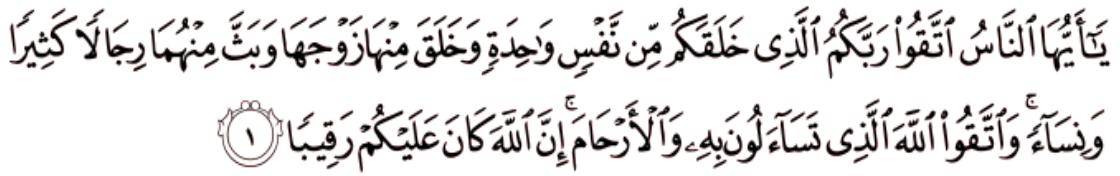
The **process** for *ShuraaBaynahum* should be inclusive. The concept of "*Baynahum"* implies inclusive discussion and diliberation among the participants. Imam W. Deen Mohammed speaking of this issue stated:*"ShuraaBaynahum means consultation among themselves or between themselves. Consultationbetween themselves, that means each member is being consulted, each member is a person to be consulted, that's what makes the Shuraa; when the discussion is going backward and forward. I am having something to say and you are having something to say back to me, that's Shuraa…"*

The ultimate **objective** of the Shuraa process is to reach a decision supported by a majority of those deliberating. This is referred to as *majority consensus.*In conjunction with the aforementioned process, Shuraa participants are required to

deliberate on a specific proposition that will affect themselves or those they represent. This deliberation must include all those that are participating in the Shuraa with the objective to reach a majority consensus or a final position that a majority can accept. In order for *Islamic Democracy* to work successfully, once a decision is made resulting in a majority consensus, the minority who maydisagree with the proposition during the deliberation are now bound to respect and abide bythe decision.However, since human and community life is dynamic, there may be a time when the original decision may be revisited and revised or changed to fit changing community circumstances. When this condition occurs, the same process of deliberation and majority consensus applies.

The history and practice of modern democracies also instructs that those decisions that impact the entire community, may be of a sensitive nature, or bind the community to a substantive change, should require a strong majority consensus. This type of consensus has historically been interpreted as at least two-thirds or three-fourths of those voting on the issue.

Freedom of Speech



"O mankind, reverence your Guardian Evolver who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from them both many men and women. ***And reverence Allah, through whom you ask one another,*** *and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer." (Qur'an 4:1)*

*"O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.**And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger,** if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best and most suitable for final determination." (Qur'an 4:59)*

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوۡاْ بِٱلۡحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوۡاْ بِٱلصَّبۡرِ ٣

*"…Except those who believe and do good works, **and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to patience and constancy.**" (Qur'an 103:3)*

*On the authority of Abu Saeed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) say: "Whoever of you sees an evil must then change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then **(he must change it) with his tongue.**And if he is not able to do so, then (he must change it) with his heart. And that is the slightest (effect of) faith." [Recorded by Muslim]*

*"…I would think the system that they would have would be one of **Islamic Democracy that would protect the rights of the individual to voice his sincere complaints…The opportunity to speak is supposed to be preserved in an Islamic society…"**(IWDM on Islamic Democracy, Muslim Journal, May 18, 1984)*

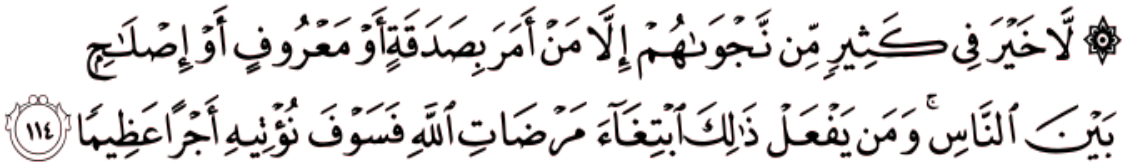
It is clear from the Qur'an, Hadith, and teachings of Imam W. Deen Mohammed that one of the most important and precious human rights and obligations is **freedom of speech.***Islamic Democracy* must insure this basic human right. This includes: 1) the rights of individuals to express their opinions or concerns to question each other, their leaders, and institutions; 2) representatives and leaders must be free to respectfully differ with each other in both private and public; and 3) the news media has the right to inquire and question the leaders, policies, and institutions of the community and society.

The concept of free speech in Al-Islam is to *"speak a word directed to the right" (Qur'an 33:70), "exhort each other to the truth" (Qur'an 103:3),*or to*right a wrong* (*Qur'an 4:148* and above cited Hadith).As a result, the purpose of speech for Muslims is not to defame, slander, or mock others*(Qur'an 49:11)*. However, when

there is a gross wrong or oppressive action, Muslims are obligated both to speak out against and act to correct the social injustice or wrong that has occurred.

The process of *Islamic Democracy* must both accommodate and encourage open, honest,and respectful dialogue to correct wrong-doing; resolve differences; or encourage personal/community improvement, growth, and development.

Transparency/Openness



*"**There is no good in much of their secret talks**, except for those who enjoin charity or kindness or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah, We will give him a great reward."*
(Qur'an 4:114)

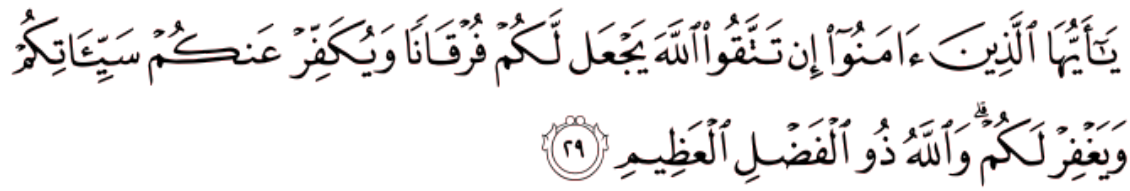
*"…Don't be afraid to challenge each other. **That's our strength.***
***Openness**.Sincerity first, then the courage to express it. That's our strength."*
(IWDM, Midwest Shuraa Meeting, October 12, 1997)

Transparency and openness are critical elements of an *Islamic Democracy.* This principle means that the community has a right to know of activities and decisions that impact or guide community life. It also means that actions of leaders and community institutions should be open to the scrutiny of the believers. This includes reports on activities, decisions, and the status of any community assets.

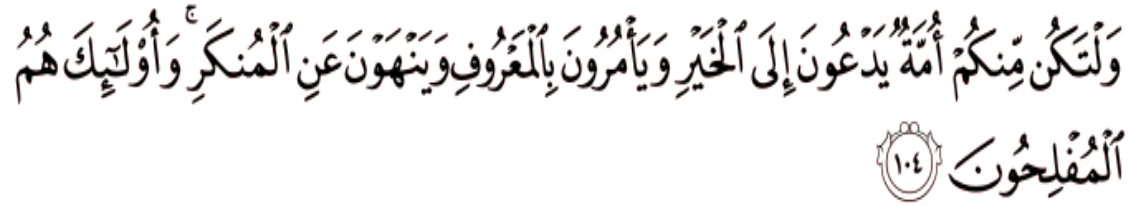
Individuals in a leadership role, representing a body of believers or a community institution, are obligated to give periodic written reports to the members of the institution/organization, and/or community. In addition, the leaders should feel obligated to answer inquiries from the believers, Muslim or other news media, and/or general public on the affairs of the institution, entity, or organization which they represent. This includes opportunities for open, honest discussion or debate of community concerns.

A related concern is the use of assets collected from the community. When Muslim organizations, entities, or institutions collect money from the community, those organizations are obligated to report back to the community on how those funds were used. Ironically, some of those same institutions will give annual reports to state or federal government entities but blatantly ignore requests from the Muslim community on the status of those assets collected from the believers. Failure to be financially accountable erodes both confidence and willingness in the believers to financially support other worthy causes in the future. It also erodes community credibility from those outside of the community that may want to contribute resources to support vital initiatives and efforts.

Standards



*"O you who have believed, if you reverence Allah, **He will grant you a criterion** and will remove from you your misdeeds and forgive you. And Allah is the possessor of great bounty." (Qur'an 8:29)*



"…G-d says in the Qur'an 'wa-yamurunabil-maruf' (3:104), order, command, instruct by the good standards of excellence or goodness.** 'Maruf,' from the word Arafa, which means to know, to be informed to know about this. So 'yamurunabil-maruf,' order, command, instruct upon what has been established as the known principle, known guideline, known rule, it's acknowledged. So what is acknowledged? 'La-ilaha-il-lallah' there is no g-d but (one) G-d, that's acknowledged, everybody knows this. Every Muslim should know that right? Muhammad Rasulullah, that's maruf isn't it? It's known, well known, and established….**Command, order, instruct, by that which is known, well known,

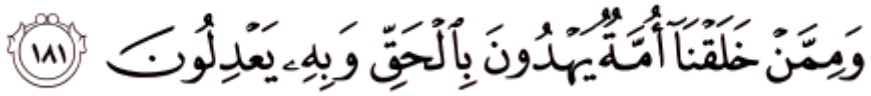
and established as the standard. It's the standard. The standard rule, the standard principles, the standard guidelines…"*(IWDM Speaks to the Chicago Imams on the Role of Shuraa in the Muslim Community)*

In the above cited tafseer of ayat 3:104, Imam W. Deen Mohammed defines the term *"wa-yamurunabil-maruf" as ordering, commanding, and instructing by the "good* ***standards of excellence or goodness****."* He further defines this Qur'anic instruction with examples of known Islamic principles and uses the terminology of *standard rule, principles, and guidelines.*The Imam also referenced this concept in the context of understanding the role of shuraa.

As communities develop naturally, a logical progression involves establishing basic standards, both to guide the development and protect members of the community. In *Islamic Democracies* these standards represent the will of the majority of the members as expressed through their representatives. While the obvious standards for Muslims involve the *furqan* of the Qur'an and *uswah* of the Prophet, Allah also permits *"those in authority" (authorized leaders and representatives of the community)* to establish standards and guidelines consistent with the*furqan* and *uswah*.

As earlier stated, part of the Qur'anic guidance also includes understanding and incorporating the principles of the *fitra-llahi (natural pattern for man's development)*into the life of the society. These universal principles reflect the natural growth and development of individuals and communities *"from stage to stage."*As communities move through different stages of development, they may require different standards to accommodate their development. One of the essential roles of leadership is understanding the stage of development of the community and working with other leaders/representatives to adopt the appropriate Islamic standards, guidelines, and processes in the best interest of the community.

Justice and Conflict Resolution



*"And among those We created is a community which **guides by truth and thereby establishes justice."** (Quran 7:181)*

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُونُواْ قَوَّٰمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِٱلۡقِسۡطِۖ وَلَا يَجۡرِمَنَّكُمۡ شَنَـَٔانُ قَوۡمٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعۡدِلُواْۚ ٱعۡدِلُواْ هُوَ أَقۡرَبُ لِلتَّقۡوَىٰۖ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ خَبِيرُۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ ٨

***"O you who believe, stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses in justice,** and let not the hatred of others prevent you from being just. Be just, that is nearer to piety and reverence and respect Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do." (Quran 5:8)*

إِنَّمَا ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنُونَ إِخۡوَةٞ فَأَصۡلِحُواْ بَيۡنَ أَخَوَيۡكُمۡۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُرۡحَمُونَ ١٠

*"The believers are but brothers, so **make settlement and reconciliation between your brothers.** And reverence Allah that you may receive mercy." (Qur'an 49:10)*

One of the most ancient and essential principles for collective human life is the concept of justice and conflict resolution. Allah has prescribed a standard of justice for the community of believers. Believers are also enjoined to reconcile their differences when they have a conflict between themselves. The *furqan of Qur'an*, *uswah of the Prophet* and *community standards* are the balance that justice is weighed against.

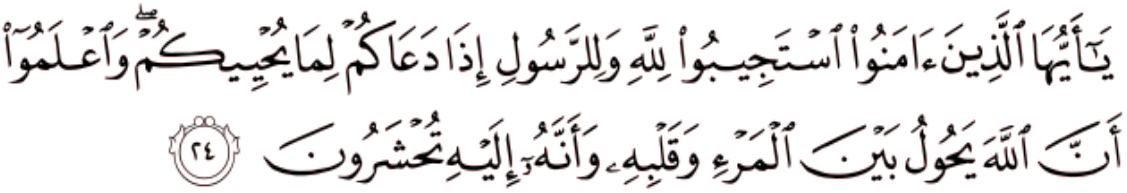
As inevitable conflicts occur between human beings the community must have a process to ensure justice for those who have been wronged. While the larger society of the country maintains an elaborate criminal justice system, local, state, and national laws also support the practice of arbitration between contending parties for non-criminal legal disputes. This reality allows faith communities to apply the principles of their faith to settle disputes. As a result, Muslims have an obligation to look to the standards of Al-Islam first to settle their non-criminal disputes and must establish Islamic arbitration options for believers.

One of the greatest challenges to a democracy is the rule of law must be applied to all equally. For justice to be a reality, everyone must be held to the same standards in the society. This is especially true for the leaders or representatives of the people. Leaders and representatives must exemplify the *furqan, uswah,* and *community standards.*The community must also hold leaders accountable to set the proper example. Allah, through the revelation of Qur'an, places a higher value on justice and rule of law over the ties of kinship and social or economic relationship *(Qur'an 4:135).*

As the community develops Islamic arbitration options with standards that apply to all, those parties engaging in the process must be willing to accept both the outcome and legitimacy of the process.

Finally, Muslim communities should have the expectation that both believers and leaders make every effort to reconcile their differences. While personal differences or positions may always remain between contending parties, Allah enjoins reconciliation on believers to promote the peace, unity, and long term stability of the community. Both believers and leaders should always be conscious of this reality and must humble themselves to accept thisQur'anic injunction.

Responsive



"O you who have believed, ***respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.*** *And know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will be gathered." (Qur'an 8:24)*

On the authority of Abu HamzahAnasibnMaalik, the servant of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh),from the Prophet (pbuh) who said, ***"None of you (truly) believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."*** *[Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim]*

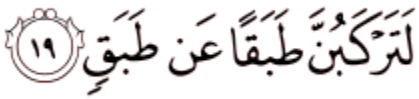
"If you want to have a society or community of Al-Islam, where-in we are responsible for its support, for its support system, and for holding up that life, then ***you have to insist upon your leadership being morally strong, morally responsive, and morally responsible.****" (IWDM, Leadership Training & Development Workshop, 2001 Islamic Convention)*

Another important principle of democracy is responsiveness to the needs of individuals, groups, and community concerns. Human life and societies are dynamic and ever-changing. As a result, there is always a need for the leadership to monitor the state of the community and/or respond to concerns when they are brought forward.

In the quoted Hadith above, Muhammad the Prophet (pbuh) tied the priority of responding to the needs of other believers to one's own belief. Similarly, in the above cited quotation from Imam W. Deen Mohammed, the concept of responsiveness is tied to the moral strength and responsibility of community leadership. Consequently, responding to the individual, group, or collective needs is a moral obligation of the society and its leadership.

In addition to responding to the needs of individual, group, or community concerns, external factors also impact community life. Communities must adapt to these external forces. As a result, leadership must be responsive to external forces or influences that may adversely affect the direction or development of community life. This concept in the language of Qur'an is called *"munkar"(Qur'an 3:104)."Munkar"* represents those influences that negate or void the human nature and community potential. The role of leadership in these circumstances is to mobilize the community and its resources to address the challenges.

Progressive



"You will surely travel from stage to stage." *(Qur'an 84:19)*

"Life shows progress and growth. Allah wants us to show growth…"
"…Islamic community should never be stagnant…"
"We should be progressing *and inventing new things and improving upon our lives and our comforts..."*
(IWDM, Leadership Training & Development Workshop, 2001 Islamic Convention)

Similar to the principle of responsiveness is the concept of the progression of human life. Just as creation is dynamic and evolves and moves from "*stage to stage*," Allah reminds us thatthe human social and community life also evolve. This progression is representative of the growth and development of the human consciousness.

As the collectivehuman consciousness continues to learn, reason, and innovate, new realities emerge for society.This on-going development results in a deeper understanding of the human reality, our relationship with creation, new technologies, and new social realities. Thelong-term impact of this natural change is improvement for the society. These changes also impact every institution of community life.As a result, governance systems must accommodate these natural changes.

Islamic Democracy represents the form of governance that can best accommodate this natural social progression. As the collective consciousness of a society or community evolves, new expectations arise for every social institution. As a result, new social standards emerge that move the society forward. Since nothing in the natural human dynamic remains the same, communities must continue to change and adapt to meet the changing needs of community life. Leadership in an *Islamic Democracy* must also understand and reflect this reality.

Current Situation/Future Challenges

Currently, the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed reflects a natural progression relative to governance models at the local, sectional (regional), and national levels.The elements of *Islamic Democracy* exist in a variety of forms at all three levels of community life.

Local Models (Masajid/Centers/Organizations)

Current local models of governance include incorporated non-profit organizations in the form of masajid, Islamic Centers, or other Islamic organizations.Examples of Islamic community organizations with local chapters include: the Clara Mohammed Schools; International League of Muslim Women; American Coalition of Good Government; and National Muslim Business Council. Non-profit organizations are required to register with and must be accountable to each state. These entities also utilize standard processes in order to function and conduct business. In accordance with the instruction of Imam W. Deen Mohammed, local masajid and centers operate autonomously in accordance to their own governance practices.

Most masajid and Islamic Centers utilize **bylaws, elections, and boards or shuraa bodies** to order their corporate entities. Two of these elements are usually required to secure and maintain the legal status of incorporation. These include bylaws and officers. Bylawsare important tools to define the scope of activities and governance processes of the organization. Many states also require a designation of the leadership (officers and/or board of directors) of the organization to hold specific individuals accountable for the actions of the corporation and legal compliance. The shuraa process and structure of the local entity is also defined by the bylaws.

Elections of officers including Imams are an essential element defined by the organization bylaws. Imam W. Deen Mohammed also emphasized that there

should be periodic elections of Imams and other officers to reflect the will and consent of the believers/members in the practice and spirit of *Islamic Democracy*. In this same spirit, Imams and other community leaders must act in the role of the ***Servant Leader***and serve the interests of the community, at the will of the community. In this role, the *Servant Leader* does not dictate or make all the decisions for the community but follows the guidance of Qur'an, uswah of the Prophet (pbuh), thinking of Imam W. Deen Mohammed, and guides the community through an Islamic decision making process (i.e. shuraa).

Reflection on the current situation at the local level reveals **several areas for improvement and continued community development**. One example is the fact that there are some communities where the bylaws either are outdated, not available, or are unknown to the common believers. Bylaws are important because they identify and authorize criticalprocesses of the organization such as shuraa and elections. Processes such as the frequency of elections and the qualifications of those who can participate in the elections are specified in the bylaws. If those bylaws are not up to date or are not widely known to the local community it is recommended that they be revised and brought up to date with the input of the community of believers. This can be done in a variety of ways including a community meeting or structured strategic or planning process. Another way of insuring access to the bylaws for the common believer and/or the public at large is by posting them on the masjid/center website.

Sectional (Regional) Models

The next level of governance for the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed is the section (region). Currently, within the community there are seven geographic sections (regions): New England; Northeast; Mid-Atlantic; South; Southwest; Midwest; and West. Each section has its own unique characteristics and is in a different stage of development.At this level there are several organized efforts including Imams, Islamic organizations, and Sectional Leadership Teams.

In all seven sections, Imams are organized and have **elected Section Conveners**. Currently, none of the seven organized Imams groups at the section level is

incorporated as a legal entity. Each sectional group of Imams has its own standards of operationdetermined through their own shuraa process. A common feature in all seven sections is the elected position of the Section Convener. While the role of the Section Convener has evolved over the last few years, current responsibilities include:

- Convene sectional meetings of Imams;
- Establish a process of *"AmruhumShuraaBaynahum"* to disseminate information; and get input from Imams within the section;
- Represent the concerns and/or positions of the Imams in the section *(as determined through a shuraa process resulting in majority consensus)*;
- In conjunction with other Conveners, take positions on behalf of the Imams, representing the interests of the larger community;
- Report to the community on the activities of the section;
- Travel as necessary to attend regional or national meetings; and
- Actively support and promote the *vision and thinking of Imam W. Deen Mohammed* including:
    - Establishing the principles and practices of *Islamic Democracy*
    - Increasing the Islamic knowledge of Imams and other leaders
    - Creating a forum for *Muslim Intelligentsia*
    - Developing Muslim Community Life

The Imams and their **shuraaprocess**within the section allow for the movement of information or concerns from the local masjid or Islamic Center to the section level. Ideally, local Imams represent the thinking or positions of their respective communities. Through this process, the thinking of local community can be represented by the local Imam in the sectionalshuraa deliberation process. As a result of the shuraa process, the Section Convener can represent the thinking or position of Imams and communities within the section.

One promising outcome of the sectional and national shuraa process among Imams is the **development of Islamic arbitration options** at the sectional level. This process came about as a way to provide local communities and disputing parties the option of Islamic arbitration as opposed to expensive and sometimes embarrassing litigation through the public court system.Each section can develop arbitration teams that respond to periodic requests from disputing parties within

local communities for legal arbitration in lieu of litigation.Arbitration teams are implemented at the mutual request of the disputing parties to the Section Convener. The arbitration team consists of the Sectional Convener or his designee (including individuals with specific areas of expertise pertaining to the dispute); a believer with legal/arbitration expertise; and a recognized scholar of the Quran.The team will come on site to hear both parties, they subsequently render a decision. Both parties must accept the decision and outcome of the arbitration team.

Another recent development within one section, with the possibility of replication in others, is the creation of **regional leadership teams**.Over the last few years, the Midwest Section has developed the *"Midwest Leadership Team (MLT)."*The leadership team model includes Imams and other leaders of expertise in the Midwest Section. The MLT is composed of seven team leaders and teams that work throughout the year on the critical areas of community development. These areas include Islamic Development, Marriage and Family Life, Youth Engagement, Education, Business/Economic Development, Culture, and Government. The team leaders meet throughout the year to develop plans, strategies, and activities addressing the major focus areas. In addition to working year-round, the team leaders serve as a steering committee and plan the annual Midwest Leadership Conference where they report to the community on their progress and get feedback from conference attendees. Recently, the Section Conveners agreed to adopt the *Midwest Leadership Team* model as a template to develop sectional leadership teams.

The regional leadership team model recognizes that **communityleadership is diverse and extends beyond the Imams**. The benefit of the model is the engagement and utilization of the talent of progressive and productive leaders (*intelligentsia*) of the community. The leadership team model also **expands and diversifies the governance and leadership capacity of the community, in the vision of Imam W. Deen Mohammed.**It focuses attention on making on-going progress on the critical areas of community development and provides for inclusion and recognition of existing community initiatives or organizations that have regional operations (i.e. American Coalition for Good Government).

Areas for on-going attention and improvement at the section level include the **continued development of leadership teams and increased involvement of local Imamsin the sectional shuraa.** In order for the community to fully realize improved governance through *Islamic Democracy*, Imams must stay involved and engaged in the sectional shuraa process. This involvement is critical to the continued development of the community. It ensures the maximum input and integrity of the collective decision making process. Sectional shuraaof Imams and leadership teams can also benchmark each other to identify areas of exceptional development that can be shared through a process of progressive learning, and on-going improvement.

National (Community-wide) Model

The community has a diverse array of national leaders and organizations. This includes Imams organized through the Section Conveners and a number of organizations addressing the many areas of community need and development.

The seven Section Conveners of Imams provide a national forum for the shuraa process for Imams, local masajid, Islamic Centers, and concerned believers.The Conveners also try to address issues of national or international concern that may impact the community. Within the last three years, the Conveners have developed several **initiatives that promote community development and improve communication**.These include national Imams' meetings; *Community Leadership Summits*; developing and maintaining a community website; and the publication of major community announcements.

The Section Conveners have initiated the ***Community Leadership Summits (CLS)*** as a forum to identify and discuss the developmental needs of the community; explore effective strategies and solutions; and facilitate dialogue with local Imams and national community leaders. The CLS activities began in early 2013. Since that time, there have been five sessions in four sections of the country. Outcomes from the CLS sessions over the last two years include:

- Reaching consensus on the five priorities for the development of community life: Economics, Education, Culture, Government and Youth Development;

- Reaching consensus on an acceptable reference for community identity;
- Exploring sectional leadership models providing regional (and possible national) forums for community intelligentsia;
- Identifying South African partnership opportunities in the areas of education and business;
- Developing a conceptual framework on the essential elements of community governance: *Establishing Islamic Democracy*; the *Expectations for Community Representation*; and *Establishing Community Standards and Accountability*.

Continuing the tradition of conducting Imams' meetings at major community functions, the Section Conveners have facilitated discussions to update Imams on Convener activities; get input on proposed initiatives; and discuss areasofconcern from participating Imams.

A major achievement from the Section Conveners has been the development of the**community website:*iwdmcommunity.com***.The website is an important tool enhancing communication within the community and connecting others to over two hundred (200) masajid, Islamic Centers and organizations associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed. Other advantages of the website includeposting announcements relative to important dates and position statements and responding to posts from the public regarding questions or comments. Current plans include updating masjid/center locations, providing additional contact information, and adding links to other community organizations and section websites. Another important feature of the website is the ability of disenfranchised believers to get information and voice opinions on community issues.

Acting on behalf of the larger community,the Section Conveners have also expanded both internal and external communications with the **publication and posting of major announcements and position statements**. These statements were posted on the community website, and published in the Muslim Journal and other local newspapers throughout the country.

In addition to the masajid, Islamic Centers, and organized Imams, there are a number of **national community organizations and leaders**that promote the development of community life. These include:

- *The Clara Muhammad Schools*
- *National Education Team*
- *Muslim Journal*
- *International League of Muslim Women*
- *National Muslim Business Council (NMBC)*
- *National Muslim Chamber of Commerce*
- *American Coalition of Good Government (ACGG)*
- *Muslim American Logic Institute (MALI)*
- *National Association of Students of Imam Mohammed (NASIM)*
- *Community Life Forward (CLF)*
- *The Mosque Cares*
- *Muslim American Veterans Association (MAVA)*
- Muslim Radio Stations (i.e. *AM 360*, and *Station IWDM*), and
- *M.A.S.J.I.D. (The Muslim Adhan School of Jannah, Ihsan and Da'wah)*

The challenge moving forward for the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed is to identify ways and vehicles for the diverse leadership of the community to communicate, work together, make decisions, and hold ourselves accountable. This is the definition of governance.

Working Together and Making Collective Decisions

While the intent of the *Community Leadership Summits (CLS)* is to create a forum for Section Conveners, Imams, local, and organization leaders to share information and coordinate efforts toward a common community agenda, that reality has yet to fully materialize. However, in the future, as sectional leadership teams develop, the CLS format can be adapted to allow the sectional leadership team leaders to come together, coordinate strategies, and develop a national agenda for community development.

Community Representation, Authorization,Accountability and Standards

Another current challenge for our community is the phenomenon of *"self appointed leaders"* representing the community to outside entities. In the current vacuum of a clearly defined and integrated governance model that is accepted by a majority of the believers and leaders, individuals emerge claiming to represent the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammad. This situation presents confusion to others outside of the community. It can also have a harmful impact on the ability to develop long-term relationships with other organizations or entities seeking to interact with the community. *"Self appointed leaders"* have noaccountability to the community at-large.

Leaders and others representing the community nationallyshould be authorized through a democraticprocess and must be held to the expectation of the responsibility to report-back,submit themselves to questions, get feed-back, and to take shuraa with key stakeholders of the community.These leaders must also be held accountable to democratically developed community standards. Any individual is free to represent themselves, their masjid, or Islamic organization.However, **true community representation is authorized only through the process of *Islamic Democracy.***

A Natural Progression Toward*"Universally Recognized Human Excellence"*

Over the last five years, the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed has made amazing progress in naturally developing a unique model of *Islamic Democracy*. At all levels of community life, elements of *Islamic Democracy* are starting to take root.**As this community continues to evolve and refine the elements of our current local, sectional, and national governance models, a *world-class model of Islamic Democracy* will emerge that will represent the excellence of our human nature.**