

Huffington Post - Ramadan Reflection Day #6: Who Speaks for American Muslims?

This Ramadan,
Imam

Khalid Latif, Executive Director and Chaplain of the Islamic

Center, will for a second year in a row be keeping a daily journal for the Huffington Post. His sixth article, entitled "Ramadan Reflection Day 6: Who Speaks for American Muslims?" was published earlier today. To read the entire article in full, please [click here](#)

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Imam Khalid Latif

Ramadan Reflection Day 6: Who Speaks for American Muslims?

Imam Khalid Latif is blogging his reflections during the month of Ramadan, featured daily on HuffPost Religion. For a complete record of his previous posts, click over to the Islamic Center at New York University or visit his author page, and to follow along with the rest of his reflections, sign up for an author e-mail alert above, visit his Facebook page or follow him on Twitter.

Sherman Hemsley passed away yesterday. For those who don't know him, he played the character "George Jefferson" on the TV sitcom "The Jeffersons." He and his wife "Louise," lovingly called "Weezy" at times on the show by her husband, brought a lot of different laughs and lessons to me growing up. My family would regularly watch shows like "Good Times," "All in the Family" and "Sanford and Son," each funny in

their own way, and at times purposefully educational. Many episodes dealt directly and indirectly with issues of race and racism, privilege, socioeconomic reality and culture. Watching Archie Bunker deal with the reality that a black man moved into his neighborhood, or George Jefferson interact with Tom and Helen, the interracial white husband and black wife with a daughter named Jenny, presented a good tool for learning about life experience of others. In homes that would never allow people of different skin colors in through the front door, the television was bringing them in and letting stories be heard that needed to be. Muslims can learn something from this.

Muslims today find themselves in a place where our narrative is being told by others. Many equate a normative understanding of Islam to something that is radical in its nature. Politicians are making absurd statements to further their campaign goals bringing into question anyone who is Muslim for no other reason than they practice Islam. Most recently, Michele Bachmann tried to link Huma Abedin, wife of Congressman Antony Weiner and aide to Hillary Clinton, and others working in government to the Muslim Brotherhood. As ridiculous as her conclusions are, the sad reality is that there will be some who will actually believe her voice and since Muslims wait for a voice to speak before speaking ourselves, we are one step behind.

Most of time we find ourselves reactively saying what we are not. We are not violent, we are not terrorists, we are not oppressive to our women. There can be a value in this, but in only saying what I am not, I am not saying what I am. Television, and other mediums of art, pose a very important solution to this problem.....to continue reading, please click here