

**Skype Video Conference with Jaamia Galant
Cape Town, South Africa - ECU, Greenville, NC, USA
Class Questions and Jaamia Galant's Responses
HIST 3830, Africa and Islam
1 December 2013**

1. Do you really read the entire Quran during Ramadan?

Individually, most people do read the entire Quran during this month. Many mosques also recite the entire Quran during the special evening prayers during Ramadan.

2. Please clarify the difference between "coloured" and "black".

Both categories are historical racial classifications used under the Apartheid policy to separate people on racial grounds. These are not identity labels that people self-identified with, rather it was an imposed classificatory system that has no rationality. Under Apartheid 'coloured' historically referred to people of mixed ancestry, while 'Black' referred to African language speaking South Africans like Xhosa, Zulus, Sothos etc, although 'pencil tests in the hair' were done to classify some people. Someone like Obama would have been classified as 'coloured' while Martin Luther King Jr. might have been classified as 'black'. I was also classified as 'coloured'.

3. Is Aisha more influential than Khadija?

They lived in different eras, and each one was influential in their different ways. In the early days of Islam Khadeeja supported the Prophet Muhammad both emotionally and financially and was the first person to accept Islam from his testimony. 'Aisha was very influential after the life of the Prophet as a significant source of knowledge on the life and teachings of the Prophet.

4. How prominent are mosques that seat men and women together?

It is not very prominent, in SA or elsewhere.

5. Is there prejudice from other Muslims in Cape Town against your mosque's members?

Yes, mostly because of our position on women, but also because of our welcoming culture towards people of all faiths and none.

6. What is the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Cape Town?

Compared to other parts of the world, relations are very convivial. Inter-marriage is common and there is general good neighbourliness amongst all.

7. In your mosque's mission statement, there is a dimension about environmental justice. Please explain the relationship between environmental justice and Islam?

Drawing on verses from the Qu'ran (Q3:190-1) we have embraced the notion that nature and the environment are indispensable guides and intimate companions of faith in Islam. In these verses Muslims are exhorted to observe, contemplate and reflect on the signs of God in the universe. The Qur'an insists that these signs manifest all we need to know about God and our rightful place in it.

See Imam Rashied Omar's sermon on this topic 'Restoring the Balance: A Theological Response to Climate Change' on www.rashiedomar.com.

8. In your essay about the wife of the Prophet, you expressed concerns about the pious women of Islam not being as well recognized. Why do you think this is?

This was primarily because of the patriarchal dynasties and misogynistic interpretations of the Qur'an that followed the demise of the Prophet. These dynasties and interpretations ensured that the egalitarian spirit of the Qur'an was diluted and suppressed. Such misogynistic interpretations were produced by interpreting the Qur'an through the lens of secondary, less reliable sources of prophetic traditions.

9. Are you ever personally faced with prejudice as a woman in the Islamic community?

Yes, in the sense that there are traditionally male domains which women are excluded from through cultural practices rather than Islamic principles. For example, I am frowned upon for attending the gravesite at a funeral since women traditionally do not accompany men to the gravesite.

10. What is it like to be a Muslim on the campus of the University of Cape Town?

Campus is very open, and Muslims completely integrated with student population, so we do not stand out as a group, nor are we targeted in any way.

11. Have you been on the Hajj? If not, do you plan to go soon?

No, I have not been, but do plan to do so in the near future, God-willing.

12. Is it permissible for progressive Muslims to drink a glass of wine on special occasions?

No, it is not permissible under any circumstances – progressive or not!

13. Do you accept the traditional practice of Muslim men having more than one wife?

Personally I do not, and it is rare among Muslim men here.

14. May Muslim men legally have more than one wife in South Africa?

No, but they may have more than one wife if married only by Muslim rites.

15. Do you belong to a Sufi organization? Which one is most prominent in South Africa?

I do not formally belong to a Sufi group, but our cultural practice of Islam in SA is infused with Sufi influences. Prominent groups in SA are the Qadiriyyah, Naqshbandiyyah and Chistiyyah Orders.

16. What is your school of law?

I am traditionally a follower of the Shaf'i school of law, but I embrace all the traditional Schools of law and do not adhere strictly to any one school.

17. What are your views on Nana Asma'u?

I am not that familiar with her history, but she certainly is someone deserving of further study.