A Life Well Lived

(Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raj'un)
Verily we belong to Allah (God), and verily to Him do we return." (Al Baqara 2:156)

On April 1, 2020, Shaykh Ibrahim Abdul-Malik, PhD, EdD, returned to Allah (Great and Sublime is He). A nonagenarian of 96 years, and a life lived to its fullest, Dr. Ibrahim will be well remembered and loved by his friends, family, students, mentees, and colleagues (inshallah). For the Graduate Theological Foundation, Dr. Ibrahim was the El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz Professor of American Muslim History and Culture. His 2013 commencement address is still remembered for its humor and insightfulness. His E-Tutorial Offerings included: Muhammad – The Very Human Prophet; and Women And Gender In Islam.

A giant walked among us. How can we tell? One way is by Dr. Ibrahim’s tremendous intellect. Specifically, not just his academic accomplishments in biology, science, education, and religion; I include his gigantic insight into the human character and its frailties. We can tell a giant walked among us by his enormous capacity for love and understanding. Ask any of his many students, or the clients who benefited from his wisdom in counseling. And, Dr. Ibrahim was foremost in the recognition of the rights of equal participation of women within the Muslim Community.

Of his earthlier accomplishments, Dr. Ibrahim earned his first doctor’s degree in Science and Education at Harvard University in 1971, and his second in Islamic Studies from the Graduate Theological Foundation in 2007. He was a Certified Master Practitioner of both Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Ericksonian Therapeutic Hypnosis, a qualified nutritionist, and a member of the World Health Community of NLP Practitioners.

In the area of education administration, Dr. Ibrahim was the first Black Vice-Chairman of the New York City Board of Examiners (NYCBE). The NYCBE had the responsibility of overseeing all of the testing and credentialing from class room teacher to school superintendent. Dr. Ibrahim retired after 25 years with the New York City School System (teacher, principal, Board of Examiners). He was an Adjunct Professor at City University of New York (The City College and Baruch College) for ten years. He was director of Bank Street College outreach program. Following that, as UNESCO Science Advisor, he established and headed the first junior college in the Islamic Republic of Maldives, South Asia.

Shaykh Ibrahim has been part of the Adjunct Faculty in the School of English, Philosophy, Humanities & Religious Studies at Fairleigh Dickinson University since 2003. With his two colleagues, a Rabbi and a Roman Catholic Priest, he taught two courses: “One God,
Three Paths,” and “The Battle Over the Book.” Earlier, he also taught “The Role of Women – in Judaism, Christianity & Islam.” His new course: “Islamic Civilization – Past & Present.” is now available in the University catalogue.

As a member of the Admiral Family Circle Islamic Community (Admiral Family), Shaykh Ibrahim was a co-founder of Imams Council of New York, and Associate Director of the UN Summer Internship Program, Geneva, Switzerland, sponsored by Malik Shabazz Human Rights Institute. Immediately following September 11, 2001, He served for several months as a Volunteer Disaster Chaplain with American Red Cross, at and near ground zero, and as a Trauma Counselor, with selected Community organizations. Shaykh Ibrahim was a noted speaker at Interfaith events, particularly those seeking to improve relations among Jews, Christians & Muslims.

Shaykh Ibrahim’s unpublished works include: Islam and Muslims-Twenty-five Questions and Answers (a widely-distributed information booklet), Ramadan A Primer, Prayer in Islam (A Guide for Beginning Muslims, An Introduction for Non-Muslims), Da’wah (The Qur’anic Do’s and Don’ts ; Hajj – A Pilgrim’s Working Manual ; and Islam, Muslims & Ecumenism (Fifty Questions & Answers).

Al-‘Aṣr (العصر, By Time)

1. وَالْعَصْر
2. إنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبرِ
3. إِلَّا أَلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبرِ

By Time
Throughout time
Indeed man is in (a state of) loss,
Except those who have faith, and do righteous deeds, and enjoin one another to [follow] the Truth, and enjoin one another to (patient) perseverance

Surah Al-Asr exemplifies the life of Dr. Ibrahim and his dedication to perseverance. As I sought a proper closing for this piece, I found a poem by Georgia Douglas Johnson, an African American. I believe that Dr. Ibrahim would agree with the spirit and sentiment of the poem. I share it with you.

Your World
By Georgia Douglas Johnson

Your world is as big as you make it.
I know, for I used to abide
In the narrowest nest in a corner,
My wings pressing close to my side.

But I sighted the distant horizon
Where the skyline encircled the sea
And I throbbed with a burning desire
To travel this immensity.

I battered the cordons around me
And cradled my wings on the breeze,
Then soared to the uttermost reaches
With rapture, with power, with ease!

May Allah (Great and Sublime is He), grant my friend a blessed paradise,
Imam Muhammad Hatim, PhD, Dmin, CADC