



The Islamic Tijaniya Foundation of America, Inc. (ITFA)
Serving & Empowering the Muslim African Diaspora

In the Name of Allah the Most Gracious, the Specially Merciful.

May Allah's blessings be upon the Seal of all Prophets, Muhammad (SHS) and upon his family and companions. In the name of the youth, we the Youth Development and Leadership branch of the Islamic Tijaniyya Foundation of America send our praise and gratitude to our parents in this community. Life away from home is challenging. You have turned your backs on your respective hometowns, challenged yourselves, and immigrated to lands unknown to you for the sake of ameliorating the living condition of your families. The places where you were born and raised, the environments you grew up in and made childhood memories, the streets you walked and ran through still engraved in your memories, and the cultures you've absorbed for so many years are now distances away. The only factor standing between you and your homes that you so dearly love is the determination to keep carrying the heavy burden on your shoulders to guarantee that your families maintain a proper living in joy and dignity.

You confronted the challenges of emigration without much financial resources but you compensated that with courage, passion, dignity, vigor, and selflessness. Upon arriving in the "working field", you were met with infinite challenges but at no point did you back down or doubt. You revitalized yourselves with creativity, persistency, and determination while holding on to anything and everything to make sure that you earned a buck; but not for yourselves. You only attributed the smallest amounts of your earnings to cover your basic needs but the remaining majority was sent back home to heal the sick, feed the hungry, help the needy, and to mainly put a smile on a parent's face. You never ask for anything in return, not even a thank you. In some cases, you would humbly wrap your hard earned dollars with the envelope of apology for not being able to send back enough to cover a whole community's needs. How many times have we seen our fathers humbly dress in jeans, T-shirts, hoodies, and boots heading to work long hours so that a younger sibling could afford a new dress for an upcoming ceremony? As for our mothers, your elegant and colorful dresses, assorted with beautiful yet lavishly long scarves were suddenly replaced with hoodies, T-shirts, khaki pants, and gym shoes. The image of a soft and kind figure was now supplemented with a sight of a lone soldier confronting an army of challenges. In your foreheads we see determination and sacrifice, in your eyes we see confusion and pain but in your smile we see hope. A hope that one day, the sea of hard work you are immersed in will somehow lead you to the shores of ease.

After living in warm weather for decades, you faced excruciating cold blizzards. After wiring your brains for decades speaking your local languages, you were expected to challenge your minds and learn the English language. You left the neighborhoods where you were greeted by everyone from the older lady selling vegetables on the block to the child running an errand, and you settled for a ghetto where safety isn't granted, and where the African is sometimes ridiculed. You never let the chuckles of some local offenders wear you down. You kept your head high, walked to the nearest bus station, clocked into a factory, and lifted boxes while standing for hours at a time. Some of you have maintained this lifestyle for decades struggling through old age.

For a good majority however, the ability to work was a privilege because of the lack of working authorizations. Some found ways to make money selling commodities on the streets and festivals, some



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braided hair, but some went against their own convictions to do what is right and illegally borrowed other's work authorizations, lied about their identities and risked severe punishment just so to guarantee that the expectations and hopes of those whom they left behind are met.

As years passed, some of you were fortunate to find a spouse and build a family of your own. Others were fortunate to have their spouse join them from back home. Children were born from these families and these children became the hope for whole communities. These children would have a stronger legal status in most cases. They would represent your hopes that there would be a good end. Their bright futures are however threatened by many dangers. Dangers that can destroy their potentials spiritually, socially, physically, and mentally.

In the name of all the youth, we have only one message to our dear parents: We haven't forgotten. We can't forget. We won't forget. We, your children have joined you in this battle to make life better for our communities. You have worked hard to guarantee that we joined you here, hoping that we have a better chance in life than you. It is immensely challenging for Muslims to hold on to their values, and develop the honorable characters needed to fulfill our mission on earth as the representatives of Allah on earth. We are living in times where materialism, selfishness, arrogance, and hate reign in the hearts of many individuals in our society. Humans are becoming more and more detached from each other and gradually immersed into their personal worlds. It is true that your children are born from Muslim households but the raising is being done by the "village". The only issue with this is that our village today is made up of many different identities, groups that can in most cases be in direct contradiction with the values known, respected, and sought by Muslims.

The Youth Development and Leadership team is standing behind you. We would like to turn your sacrifices into investments that will bear the fruits of a bright future for you and your children. We are standing here to make sure that our younger siblings, your children, do not forget the hard work you have put forward. We will strive to eliminate that gap between the perceptions and realities carried by all those who have a stake in the educational, psychological, emotional and spiritual development of the youth. We are here to create an environment where parents, teachers, and the youth can share knowledge, thoughts, and ideas about general aspects and trends that could potentially affect the well-being of the development of the youth. We will strive to expose the great breadth of knowledge from the Quran, Sunnah, and Sufi texts in ways to allow the youth to practically incorporate their knowledge to restructure and enhance the quality of their daily life. We will make sure to promote the mastery of religious texts relating to Islam. We will put our efforts to assist you in promoting excellent traditional (kindergarten-12th grade) education in order to allow today's young people to secure rewarding career paths and improve economic development in their communities and respective countries.



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O Allah, our sovereign Lord, bestow peace and blessings upon our prophet Muhammad (SHS) and render him and his household safety and security from all evil.