



# TAM 2009

Tarbiya for Outreach



# background

- This is a two part presentation made in the TAM-2009 (MAS Tarbiya Annual Meeting) about the importance of outreach.



# The Context

- A generation of activists came to America, built a community, and also built a fence around the community (for protection)
  - Why: new, unfamiliar society; planning to “go back”; much wrong in society ; too diverse ;
- The hope was that the next generation would naturally take the good of both worlds and dissolve the fence
- It is time to dissolve this fence and allow a merging with the larger society
- The larger society has a right to what is inside.
- Islam is hurting since people do not know about it: Islam is trapped inside a fence
- this fence is also turning out to be porous (not a real protection)



# Agenda

1. What is **Outreach** ?
2. Outreach in the **Sunnah**
3. **Who** do we outreach to?
4. **Challenges** decreasing ability to Outreach
5. **Characteristics** needed to Outreach
6. **Model** Examples of Outreach
7. Potential **Negative** Influences of Outreach
8. Changes needed in MAS **Tarbiya**
9. **Action** Items

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# Discussion group

- discussion in a group of 2-5 individuals ..
- Write down the question, and your answers
- Write names on paper
- Assign a scribe to write down thoughts
- Share thoughts with the audience.
- Turn in this sheet of paper at the end of (each) session



# What is outreach?

- What is Outreach?
- What are some examples of outreach?
- Why is it important?
- How is it relevant to Islam?
- How is it relevant to our mission ?



# What is Outreach

- Coming out of our bubble to influence society.
- **caring** for people ;
- Sharing Islam by sharing our lives
- personal level: our **neighbors**, those around us and those we know. **Open our hearts** to others
- Institutional level: concerned about other groups and their plight.
- We improve ourselves, and care about others.
- Obligation: enjoin good, forbid evil
- Our **mission** is all about outreach
- Tarbiya is a tool to achieve mission.
- This is very relevant since America is waiting for Islam to be known and to be introduced to America.
- This is our duty **ya qawmy** : (oh, my people)
- Outreach in this context is not a department (ex: Tarbiya or fasting)



# Stages of Outreach

- Step 1 : **for others to know you**
  - Feel comfort towards you
  - Feel little or no barrier
  - Able to touch your life (especially as a person)
- Step 2 : **for others to trust you**
  - Comfortable to their own life
  - To seek your help and advice
- Step 3 : **to hear your message** (dawa)
  - Hear (not just listen), with an open heart
  - Step 3 is much harder to achieve without step 1 and 2.



# Stages of Outreach (2)

Stages of outreach *similar* to :

1. Ta'aruf: get to know each other
2. Tafahum: understand and trust
3. Takaful: actively help each other

The Essence of Outreach :

1. Smile 😊
2. Tell your (brother) you love him (personal connection)
3. Allah helps the ones who help others (rubber hits road)
4. Sincere advice (dawa)



# Examples from the Seerah

- Give examples of how the prophet(s) and the companions outreached to others
- Also from Quran and Hadith, highlighting meaning and importance of Outreach



# Examples from Seerah

- The prophet did a lot of outreach before he even spoke one word about Islam. 40 years of building a relation with society, before he speaks a word about Islam. Building trust.
- Verse : **Lita'arafu** ( to get to know one another) ...
- Hilf Al Fudool (alliance with many groups to protect the oppressed)
- Christian group visits prophet mosque; 3 nights, and prays there.
- The **Jews in Madinah** as citizens, the constitution of Madina
- Prophet and companions lived and mingled in Mecca under protection of **Banu Hashem**. They had good relations and did not malign them.
- The prophet speaks to a man in his **dialect**; Quran sent in dialects
- Prophets sent as human ; and **from** the people – why so important?
- the Quran mentions the arguments of the unbelievers and answers them
- Prophet story with the **wrestler**.
- Prophet carrying **bag of old lady** and she tells him : there is a bad man claiming to be a prophet, don't talk to him.
- Prophet asking about his on Muslim **neighbors**
- Ali ibn abu taleb **hosting** in his house for three days the man who comes from out of town (and eventually converts)



# Examples

- The man who was destroyed by Allah first (in the city example) was because “he did not outreach”
- “Best of Nations” Kuntum Khaira Ummah – Ta2mourouna : this is the essence of outreach
- “Whoever sees an evil, change it”. Man Ra2a Munkum munkaran
- Smiling to others is charity
- Helping others (Ina Allah fi 3awni al-3abd)
- Standing up for Justice (Kunu Kawamina lillah)
- You should be an ummah who .. (Wal takum munkum Ummah). This ummah will have to outreach
- The prophets came to outreach to others.
- man comes to prophet and he listens to him to the end



# Outreach, where ?

- List the groups we should be outreaching to?
- Categories
- Which group is more important and why?  
Give example



# Outreach, where?

- Muslims
  - Secular ; Non committed ; don't come to the mosque ; Practicing
  - Salafis; Other groups
  - Different ethnicities: African American Muslims, etc...
  - Converts,
  - Different ages : teens, college, young professionals,
- Religious affiliation
  - Jews; Christians; others
- Religious orientation:
  - Devout ; Believes in God only ; searching; sick of religion; atheist
- Nationality
  - Latino, African American, etc...
- Diversity
  - Young and old ; men and women ;
- Organizational outreach



# Forms of Outreach

- Within Muslim community
- Social work: to reform society
- Political: to change the policies
- Interfaith work : to reach out to leaders of other faith
- Dawa, deliver message of Islam



# Where to start ?

- Personal :
  - Reach out to people whom you *can* interact with frequently.
- MAS Chapter
  - Match (external) opportunities with (internal) available talents
- Organizational
  - Within MAS leadership : sisters
  - MAS membership : non-Arabs
  - Muslim community : Youth
  - Larger society
    - Dawa : those who are searching
    - Interfaith : moderate Jews
    - Political : local politicians
    - Social :



# Challenges of Outreach

- What are the personal and Organizational challenges that can slow down (or stop) our motivation to outreach?



# Challenges - personal

- Easier to work with **like minded** people
- More confusing, since have to deal with **gray** areas
- Feeling constant need to work with **the core** before moving to others
  - But this core cannot mature without moving to others
- Too **busy** with tactical work, no time to build relations
- To do effective outreach, we have to get “**personal**” with the people, which some may not want
- The difficulty with gradual work, which means you see some **wrong and accept it** for a while (while correcting other)
- Brotherhood when not applied correctly



# Challenges - organizational

- **Islamophobes** giving Muslim organizations a bad name
- Our **most immediate community** (ones who attend most functions, and donate) are not as interested in outreach – and so may not fund it. This affects our motivation to do outreach (but which has more numbers?)
- Need to be more mature in **understanding our society**
- the **composition** of the people that we have in MAS – attracting like minded.
- Symptom : a new member leaves all the people that s/he knew before joining. That is: s/he focuses on dealing with MAS or practicing Muslims, and loses interest in dealing with others s/he knew before. How can this be acceptable?
- Some Muslims individuals are reluctant to work with Muslim organizations



# Characteristics to be effective in Outreach

- what are the personal AND organizational characteristics needed to learn/acquire/engage effectively in outreach ?



# Characteristics to be effective in Outreach

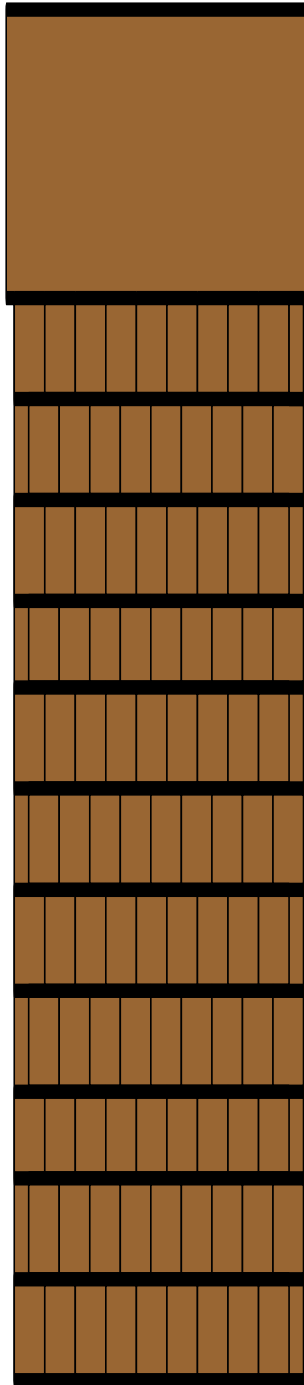
- **openness** to people and to society (open minded)
- Ability to operate (and tolerate) in **gray** areas
- Ability to **seek forgiveness** and get up and continue the road
- **Confidence** (in self and in Allah)
- ability to accept **gradual** change with people.
- desire to know, learn and engage with other people
- **emotional** intelligence to be able to understand people
- Realization that Islam is not just here to comfort the individual (comfort zone)
- a love for people
- a desire to influence people through personal relations, rather than brute force

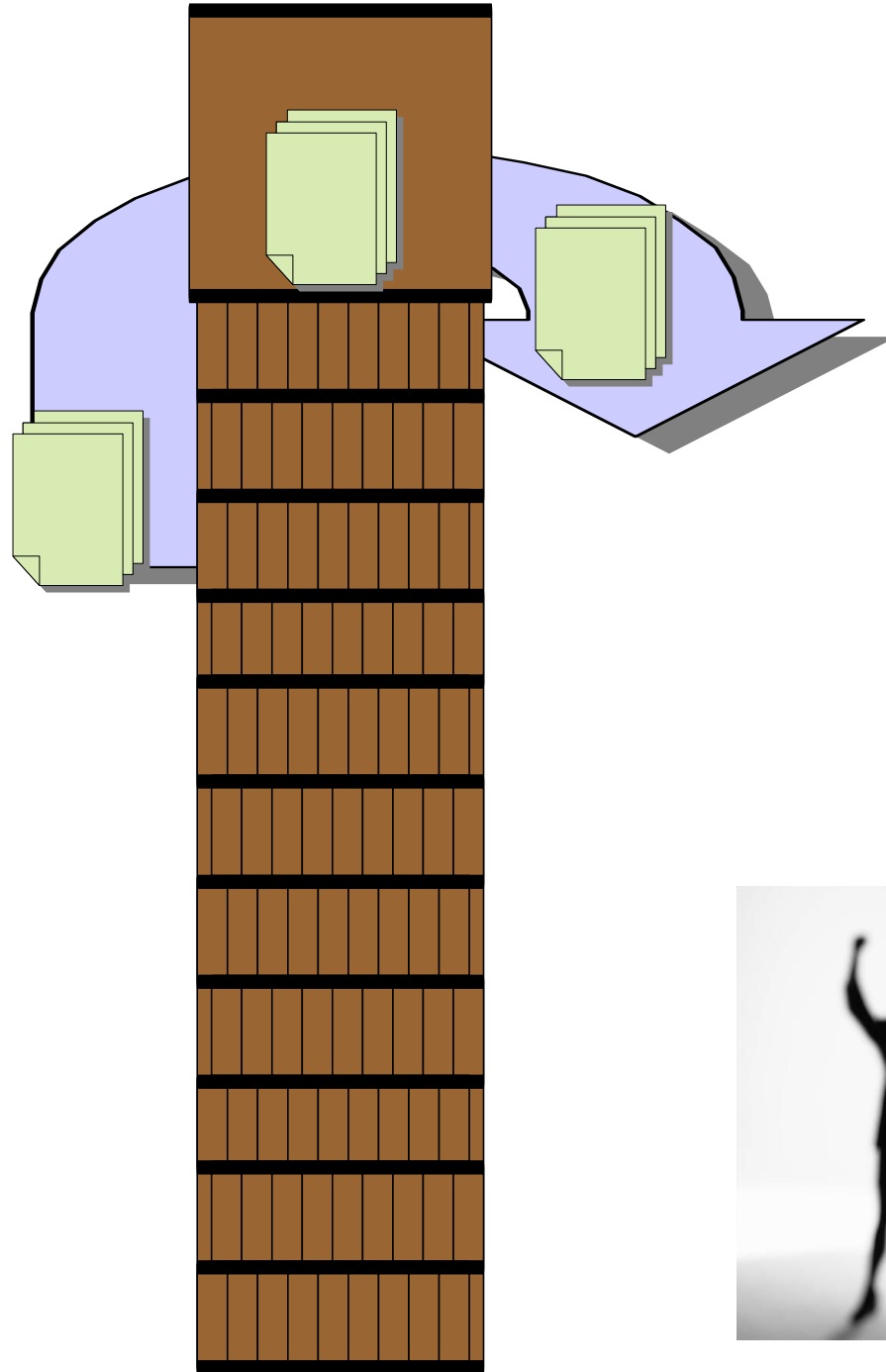
## Organizational

- No “social club” behavior
- Diversity is key to success.



# Tarbiya for Outreach : Part 2









# Relation between Dawa and Outreach

- Before prophet did dawa, he was :
  - Known to people
  - People were comfortable with him
  - People trusted him
  - Known as : al-ameen
  - Ex: what abu Sufyan told the king who asked about the prophet : who is he ?
- Dawa is much more effective with appropriate Outreach



# Outreach, then dawa

- Dawa without Outreach, is like :
  - trying to wash your hands with the gloves on
  - trying to cook a a pizza in the oven, without taking off the pizza box
  - Is like talking in a microphone, without turning it on
- The goal of outreach: break the barrier between us and others so that they can digest the message.



# Case 2

- Ahmad is a junior in college. He is recently practicing, and recently joined a MAS **usra**. He was very engaged in the past with a number of college organizations.
- Next week, Obama will be giving a critical speech on the “State of the Union”. Ahmad’s **old friends** from the Student Government are gathering for a “**social night**” to watch the speech, and to **hang out** together after the speech. Ahmad is invited by his old friends to come to the event.
- Ahmad feels that maintaining the ties with his old friends may get him **away from his Islamic** commitments, and maybe even will get him to slip back into the **old habits** before he committed to Islam. Ahmed is also concerned that the gathering may have some **inappropriate behavior** such as **mixing** with girls. What should he do ?



# What should Ahmad do?

- A. Politely **apologize** and not go to the event.
- B. He should go and **only watch** the speech and then discreetly leave as soon as he can
- C. should let them know the appropriate **Islamic Adab** under which he can attend.
- D. renew his intention and **go** to the event.



# D is what I would advise Ahmad

- Ahmad is in an **usra**. This is an important support mechanism that will help him to provide positive fuel and even to correct the negative impacts
- He already had (or has) these relationships, they are **not new**
- On a day to day basis, we engage with the society for many reasons (work, school projects, in the market) – why not when it comes to outreach ?
- Ahmad has an important obligation to deliver the message
- At the time of the prophet, when a person became a Muslim, they immediately went back to their people with the message. They did not cut these relationships
- In the case, Ahmad is aware of what could go wrong and is already afraid that this may have a bad influence on him.
- We need people who are strong and are able to confront the wrong
- Note that he is not going to a party. Although a “social event”, it is on a serious focus, with a serious group (Student Government)
- Ahmad has some leadership skills. This is not just a hang out group. It is the student government group, so although socialization is there, you should expect that it is not just a party.
- Ahmad is renewing his intention, this means he is not just going to socialize for socializing sake.



# Discussion group

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- Write down the question, and your answers
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# Models & examples

- Give specific (real-life) examples of organizations & individuals who have been effective in outreach
- Include examples outside MAS the organization for more learning (since many of us are aware of examples from MAS).
- Important : personal outreach examples.



# Models, examples

- Habitat for Humanity
- Warith Deen Muhammad and relation with the non Muslim African American community
- MalcomX and others who leveraged Islam to solve a real problem that the African Americans have in America
- College student who is proud of Islam, but is close to many nonMuslims.
- When a person becomes a MAS member, increases (not decreases) relations to new (categories of) people.



# Dangers of outreach

- list potential negative influences that can happen when a person (or organization) engage in outreach ...
- What are the personal **dangers** of outreach
- What is the Fitna of outreach ?
- how can we overcome these challenges



# Negative influences and dangers of outreach

- Fitna with the other gender
  - Not lowering the gaze, more contact, which presents some danger
- Fitna with desiring material luxuries of this life
- Fitna of approving the “gray area”
- Fitna of being exposed to sins a lot
- Fitna of belittling the sin
- Fitna of accepting the sin
- Fitna of committing the sin myself
- Fitna of liking the sin
- Fitna of leaving the good people
- Organizational : alienate Muslim community when we associate with questionable non-Muslim organizations
- A person may think that, because of their outreach, they are immune to criticism and should not be criticized.
- A person may get depressed because things are not changing
- A non-Muslim can fall in love with the Muslim girl, and this puts pressure on her to marry him
- Improper representation of Islam
- Compromise Islamic values and boundaries



# Question

- What should you do when you see a fire ?
  - (A) Run away from it.
  - (B) Run towards it.



# The Fire!

- **The answer is : it depends**
- **Why are you running towards is ? (option 1)**
  - I am curious. Want to know what the fire is like
  - I want to play with fire.
  - I want to warm my body
- **Why are you running towards it ? (option 2)**
  - Because I want to put it out ?
- **Notwithstanding our limitations, we are the most equipped to put out the fire**
  - We have to be prepared (Tarbiya for Outreach)
  - The fire is coming closer and closer to our doors. It is getting bigger
  - We cannot spend all our time preparing people to put out fires, without trusting them to be out there to put out fires.
- **Some people, while trying to put out the fire, will be burned by it. Some people may even be killed. But that is no reason to stop putting out fires. Since this is our mission : to put out fires.**
- **Example of the people of Karoon.**



# How to overcome the challenges

- Deep spiritual connection to Allah
- Develop confidence in the path
- Engage with other individuals who move with you in the right direction.
- Place correction mechanisms to help people who are getting too affected by the negative influence
- Stay committed to the jamaa (The wolf eats from lone sheep)
- Knowing WHY we are outreaching
  - not just for socializing or personal gains.
  - because we have a message that can only be delivered with effective outreach.
  - Because we love and care for “our people”.



# Tarbiya changes

- How can Tarbiya in MAS (usra and other forums) more effectively help MAS (members, committees, and the movement) to engage more effectively in Outreach



# Changes in Tarbiya

- Usra: a forum to train on the theory, and discuss the practice as to readjust person in the right direction
- Outreach assignments for each member
- Tarbiya FOR outreach (to learn to put out fires)
- Members should be evaluated on their outreach success
- Change ourselves and others around us. Focus on mission.
- Educated selves about larger society
- Focus on Islam in America, because this is our circle of influence
- Deep brotherhood should not lead to a desire for isolation
- Diverse recruitment: to pass the ball
- Take the Murabeen with you to the outreach opportunities (they should not only give the theory, but engage in the practice)



# Questions

- Question : what if I feel that :
  - I am not strong enough
  - I am an introvert
  - Don't like to socialize with people
  - I cannot do this
  - I am not comfortable



# Answers

- Then
  - Work on yourself, for the sake of Islam, to acquire these characteristics. Remember, the strong believer is more beloved to Allah.
  - Encourage others who have these skills to use them in outreach
  - Recruit others who have these skills to gain the tarbiya needed to make a difference.
  - Remember that in a fire department, not every person is a fire fighter (there is a driver, phone operator, accountant, mechanic, a doctor, etc...)



# Personal action items

- What specific action item do you take (personally, or as a committee or chapter) to engage more effectively in outreach



# Personal action

- Reach out to my personal neighbors:
  - invite them, hear their concerns, share your life with them,
- On the plane, make conversation with the person next to you
- At work, socialize with your colleagues
- Attend social gatherings with “non committed” Muslims.
- Become an active member in the DNC –
  - not just to contribute politicaly, but to touch others
- Identify a practical problem facing your local (non Muslim) community, and dedicate yourself to solving this problem (homelessness, housing, healthcare, job creation, ..)
- Sometimes, attend the Arab Students Association function.
- Outreach to relatives and family members (most difficult, since it mandates that we live Islam. But most effective)
- Open Friday prayer to everyone, including non Muslims.
- Learn history about specific community and develop relationships with them
- Develop organizational relations with new organizations



# END

- Turn in the answer sheets
- Use the back of the sheets to write comments on how to make things better or other things that are missed.
- If plan to make this presentation, email :
  - [hossam@masboston.org](mailto:hossam@masboston.org)



# Someone next to you in the plane

- a) Find another seat, away from the fire
- b) If they ask about Islam,
  - a) give them a brochure
  - b) Tell them about the five pillars
- c) Say Hi, and then go to sleep
- d) Find ways to make a meaningful conversation
- e) Hold a visible magazine about Islam, to prompt a conversation



# Case 1 (pg 1 of 4)

- Ahmed is a 21 year old Junior in a prestigious university. He was born in the US, and comes from a moderate Muslim family. He prays most of the time, and fasts in Ramadan. In general, he is proud to be a Muslim; yet he does not have close Muslim friends. In college, he has been very involved in a number of clubs, including a fraternity, Student Government, and the American Red Cross relief committee. He usually goes to pray Jumma in his MSA musala. Ahmad also needs to work hard to get very good grades to maintain the academic scholarship, which is very important to his parents.



# Case (pg 2 of 4)

- Ahmad has been growing tremendously since he started a MAS usra 6 month ago. Now, Ahmed realizes that he has a duty towards Allah and towards Islam in America. He started to be more regular in his prayers, and even prays in the musala whenever he can. He is trying to memorize some of the Quran, and fasts a few days every month. He is reading more books, listening to tapes, and now, almost all of his friends are good Muslims. Ahmed dropped all but one of the school clubs in which he has been a member. He started to focus on his college studies and his Islamic development. His Usra instituted a great PDP: Personal Development Plan, which he is taking very seriously.



# Case (pg 3 of 4)

- A week ago, Ahmed was nominated to be the vice president in his MSA. He is very excited about this opportunity, since he can serve the community, and be closer to positive influence from his Muslim friends. He is considering dropping his role in the executive committee of the campus American Red Cross to make time for this new commitment. Ahmad consulted with his usra leader, Br Wael, about what he should do. What should Wael advise him ?



# What should Wael advise Ahmad ?

- A. focus more on the usra, since this is really the most important development tool for now.
- B. Accept the MSA nomination, since this will give him a chance to grow in his Islamic development and outreach to his community.
- C. Keep the Red Cross commitment, since he has been doing it for many years.
- D. Try his best to balance and do all three activities (usra, Red Cross and MSA).



# If you cannot chose from A-D, then chose from E-H

- E. Case studies are not part of the Sunnah; and I can prove it.
- F. I think Ahmad should produce some more Cool TAM-Promotion Videos on YouTube
- G. Not sure ... My Nakib told me I must come to this “**MAS-ISNA**” TAM conference. When is Hamza Yusuf speaking ?
- H. I refuse to take sides in this nasty debate.



# Myth?

- Text, which, if not interpreted in context, will convince a person not to outreach :
- “hold on to the believers” (isbir nafsaka ma3a)
- Stay away from Gray areas (itaku al shubuhah)
- Stand against disbelief (kafarna bikum)
- Inama al Mushrikouna najas (disbelief is uncleanness)
- Sitting with sinners is wrong (awal ma dakhala al naks, bani israel)



- To sleep full, while neighbor is hungry ..  
The easiest way to solve it is
  - not to know that my neighbor is hungry:
  - “what you don’t know cant hurt you.”