

A Journey from Umra

As Salaamu Alaikum my Brothers and Sisters:

I sit here in Charles DeGaulle Airport in Paris, France at, wondering. This now grown adult, once New York City projects kid, never imagining that I would be here in this far away land. Wondering, what has just happened to me? I feel as one just awakened from a dream, a wonderful dream. In reality it did start with a dream, a dream that I had last summer. Of hearing the call of the Adzhan (the call to prayer) and looking upwards, seeing just above this extremely beautiful landscape golden Arabic letters. I remember waking and feeling an incredible inward peace, knowing within that this surrealistic dream was a premonition of something important and wonderful to come.

And come it did. For I have seen the face of the world. This long lost city kid always having imagings of travels to other worlds and stars, now dazed by an experience come from this world and yet from another. For I have seen the face of the world. It is a face composed of faces that have journeyed from all the corners of the earth for one purpose, that of the worship of Allah Subhana Wa'tala. Come to fulfill one of our obligations of worship to him.

Yes I have seen the face of the world, the young Saudi brothers from Al Qassim amazed to see a muslim from America, the Philipino brothers who sang praises of worship to Allah with me and my dearest guide Sultan Al Sultan as we circled the sacred Kaa'ba seven times in our performance of the tawaf. I saw its face in the Egyptian, Sudanese and Nigerian brothers, whose faces I could swear I had seen before as fellow african-american faces as I rode the subways and walked the streets of New York. I saw it in the Chinese sisters in their regal Asian garb that I remember seeing in the National Geographic magazine. Africa, Asia, Europe, India, America, China, Saudi, Morocco, Yemen, Russia, Jordan, Indonesia, Malaysia, all those faces were there.

Alhamdulillah, I saw the Kaa'ba with my own eyes. I felt its presence with my own heart. It's Black-covering cloth outlining it in all its beauty like the massive monolith from a movie long ago. And there at its top encircling it round were the golden letters that I had seen in a stunning dream, reminding me of the things that were to come. Every time I glanced at it, I could not believe that it was truly there. Was I really seeing it? Was I really at Al Haram, in the holy city of Makkah? Yes I was, and I was glancing all around me at the face of the world.

Oh Allah lead me on the straight and righteous path. For you have given me another gift, part of the one true gift of Al Islam. I have seen the Kaa'ba the place built by Ibrahim and Ishmael (Peace be upon them). I have been to the tomb of the prophet (PBUH), Abu Bakr and Umar in Medina. I have seen the Jannat (graves) of the wives of the Rasul, the place where many of the Sahaba lie in wait for the Day of Al Qiyam. Oh Allah lead me and keep me on the straight and righteous path.

Was it a dream? Yes, in a way it was. It was reality wrapped in the dreams of the now grown city kid from the projects. The dream of seeing other worlds and other places, and of discovering that we are not alone, and never have been. That there is a Glorious One who created us in His mercy to live and to die, and to live once again for an eternity. A promise to be fulfilled to us, by our walking the straight and righteous path of Al Islam, the path of submission to the ONE.

Where am I? Oh yeah, I am here in gay Paris (Paree) still awaiting my sky jet. Awaiting my flight back to the states, back to the land of the free and the home of the brave. My mind is a whorl with all that has happened. Johnny Neumonic overloading on data from this my world.

Makkah a glorious and wondrous place, the home of the Kaa'ba. A place in paradox dominated by the old, the present and the eternal. A paradox of humanity that lives in splendor and also in shanties of poverty on the surrounding volcanic hills. Makkah, the home of Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him). The place where Jibrel (Angel Gabriel) first came and squeezed the sense of revelation out of the prophet (PBUH). The place where modern Makkans are blasting away the volcanic hillside, building the new and the modern, in order to accommodate their relentless growth. The integration of the old and the new within Al Haram, visible in all its magnificent beauty of Marble and Minarets, surrounding the black cloth covered Kaa'ba of ancient times. Al Haram surrounded by looming tall and modern hotels and office spaces, built to house the affluent of this society.

What a paradox! What a mix of the ancient, the here and now, and of the eternal. Yet it is eternity that dominates this place. For it is here that millions come for worship, to honor the One, the True, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. Al-lahu Akbar, Alhamdulillah, Subhana Allah, La Illaha Ila'llah, there is None but the One.