



***Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:156***

"Indeed unto Allah do we belong, and, indeed to Him we will return."

**Imam Maajid Faheem 'Ali**

**July 18, 1953 – February 27, 2016**

**Masjid Jihad  
117 East 34<sup>th</sup> Street  
Savannah, GA 31401**

Imam Maajid Faheem 'Ali, a pillar of the Muslim community in Savannah and the Lowcountry, was born July 18, 1953 in Savannah, Georgia. He was raised with his siblings, Carl and Patricia, by his mother Mrs. Luellen C. Walker. Maajid graduated as the Senior Class President, with honors, from Alfred Ely Beach High School in 1971. He is a 1976, cum laude graduate of Savannah State College, earning his Bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Criminal Justice. During his matriculation, he was on the dean's list, freshman class president, and, he was a member of the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society.

In February of 1974, he became a member of the Nation of Islam movement, under The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and in 1975, he transitioned to Al-Islam, under the global leadership of Imam W.D. Mohammed. In November of 1976, he was elected Imam (religious leader) of the mosque in Savannah, Masjid Jihad, Inc., where he continued to serve until his passing. In his early years as Imam, Maajid provided exceptional and progressive religious leadership to the local Muslim community and the inmate populations at regional correctional facilities. He was also at the forefront of several Islamic-based, community engagement and awareness initiatives, including C.R.A.I.D. (Committee to Remove All Images of the Divine), and Islamic Neighborhood Watch. For almost 40 years, he gave weekly Jumu'ah khutbahs (lecture and prayer service), led Arabic and Islamic studies classes at the Masjid, officiated countless weddings, and presided the Janaazah (Islamic funeral and burial) services for community members.

In the early 80's and 90's Imam 'Ali continued to increase his Islamic knowledge and develop his Islamic leadership skills through training and travel. In 1978, he was selected as a participant of the Muslim World League's (Rabitat Al-'Alam Al-Islami) sponsored Imam's Training Program. In 1984, he served as the regional leader for the Southern Region's Council of Imams (Majlis Ash-Shura). In 1992, he was again selected to study Qur'anic recitation, Arabic, Fiqh and Islamic Studies at Sayyid Maududi International Islamic Institute in Lahore, Pakistan. In 1996, Imam 'Ali hosted Imam W.D. Mohammed, world renowned leader of the then Muslim American Society, for an historic address at Savannah State University. Additionally, he performed the Hajj pilgrimage, a once in a lifetime journey, to Makkah, Saudia Arabia in 2003. He made this pilgrimage for a second time in 2007 with his wife, Sakinah and daughter, Sadaqah, where he delivered the khutbah in 'Arafah for his delegation.

As the Imam of Savannah's first and oldest masjid, Maajid was an advocate for religious integrity, ensuring those who he encountered were left with an understanding of true Al-Islam. Over the years he has lectured to thousands of individuals, including congregations at other Masaajid throughout the southeastern United States, as well as school aged students, college students, and the general public. In 2006, he was an invited lecturer at the Coastal Georgia-Caroline Phi Beta Kappa Association, speaking on religious tolerance. Imam 'Ali was also an invited speaker at the Catholic Lawyers' Guild, and the Kiwanis Club of Savannah. In 2014, he was a guest lecturer at an Islamic Studies class at The University of South Carolina, Beaufort Campus.

Imam 'Ali hosted a weekly broadcast "Rebirth of America", which provided a forum for discussing socio-religious concerns and clarifying misconceptions about the religion of Al-Islam. The broadcast began on the local radio station WSOK in 1982, and later transitioned to cable access television from 1988 to 2001. In 2006, he reprised his role as television host, this time for "Renaissance and Reformation: Issues and Answers" which served as a platform for providing Qur'anic-based information concerning the religion of Al-Islam. He has been interviewed by staff of local newspapers and magazines, including *The Savannah Morning News*, *The Georgia Gazette*, *The South Magazine*, and *The Georgia Guardian*. Imam 'Ali published several articles in *The Herald*, *The Savannah Tribune*, and the national weekly Muslim newspaper - *The Muslim Journal*.

Engaging the community as the representative for Muslims in Savannah, Imam 'Ali was involved in several regional civic events. He gave the Interfaith Benediction for the inauguration of Mayor Floyd Adams (1996 and 2000), Mayor Otis Johnson (2004 and 2008), Mayor Edna Jackson (2012), and current Mayor Eddie DeLoach (2016). Imam 'Ali also gave the benediction for City Council meetings, and he was the first Imam to deliver the Invocation for the Chatham County Commissioner's Meeting in 2013. Additionally, Imam Maajid was a 1998 graduate of the Chamber of Commerce sponsored Leadership Savannah program. He was appointed to numerous civic organizations, including the Mayor's Human Relations Commission in 1996, and the Beaufort County Community Relations Council in 2015.

A firm believer in the common core of the Abrahamic faiths, Imam 'Ali had prominent roles in spearheading several Interfaith and religious education programs. He participated with Religious Trilogies and Symposia sponsored by Savannah State, Armstrong Atlantic State, and Georgia Southern Universities. He was a friend of several local religious and faith leaders, and an invited speaker at several churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions in Savannah and the Lowcountry, including the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Bluffton Unitarian Church, and the Union for Reform Judaism. Since 2010, Imam 'Ali has participated in the Interfaith dialogue, the Weekend of Twinning, with Temple Mickve Israel Synagogue. Since 2012, He has also participated in the weekend of Tripletting, the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim coordination of the Shabbat Service at temple Mickve Israel Synagogue. With Masjid Jihad, Inc. Imam Maajid participated in Congregations in Service, a weekend of collaboration among interfaith congregations to complete community service projects throughout Savannah. He also gave the Invocation and Benediction for the Commencement Exercises at Savannah State University (2004), and the Martin Luther King Businessman's Breakfast on several occasions.

A celebrated leader, Imam Maajid 'Ali received countless awards and honors from various community, service based, civic, and religious organizations. More recently, he was highlighted in *The South Magazine* "Faces of Faith" feature. In 2007, this same feature was subsequently highlighted as 27 out of 50 of The South Magazine's fifty greatest moments. In 2013, he was an honored guest at The Atlanta Society of Muslim Men 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weekend. Since his passing, The City of Savannah, recognized the life and contributions of Imam 'Ali with a resolution from Mayor Eddie DeLoach.

In addition to his religious duties as Imam, for approximately sixteen years, he was employed as a counselor with Tidelands Community Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Center. His work involved assisting the chronically mentally handicapped clients in a day treatment program. He helped them to acquire basic social and life skills, develop sustainable money management practices, and secure viable work experience at Tidelands' Thrift Shop. He provided clients with GED preparation in the subjects of reading and math. He assisted with providing individual, group, and family counseling.

Maajid has three sons from two previous relationships. His oldest is Shawn Castle, whose mother is Tina Herb of Savannah, GA. He was married to Jacqueline Burch. Out of their union came two additional sons, Rashid Castle 'Ali, and Raphael Castle.

Maajid is married to Sakinah Ziyadah 'Ali, they would celebrate their 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary on March 3, 2016. Sakinah worked tirelessly alongside her husband in several of his Masjid, leadership, and community activities. Sakinah was the primary educator of their four children, having homeschooled them in their elementary school years. She continued to serve an active role in their education throughout their high school and collegiate years.

The pursuit of higher education was heavily emphasized with Maajid's children. Furthermore; the significance of a supportive environment and cultural diversity is exhibited through the majority of his children's attendance and graduation from Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Rashid, earned his Bachelor's of Science in History from Georgia Southwestern University. Zarinah earned her B.S. in Biology from Tuskegee University, and Master's of Public Health (MPH) from Morehouse School of Medicine. Muslimah earned her undergraduate degree in Biology from Talladega College, and a Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Anatomy and Neuroscience from Howard University. Ikhlās studied Business Marketing at Albany State and Savannah State University. Sadaqah also followed in her father's footsteps and attended Savannah State University, graduating in 2002 with a Bachelor's in Sociology.

Maajid passed February 27, 2016 after suffering from a heart attack while walking around Lake Mayer. He is preceded in death by his brother Sam Carl Castle, III (1992); mother, Luellen C. Walker (2004); son, Raphael Castle (2005); and father, Nelson David (2006). He is survived by his dedicated wife, Sakinah Ziyadah 'Ali; sister Pat Chi (Sungwon); children: Shawn Castle, Rashid Castle 'Ali (Julia), Zarinah 'Ali Johnson (Kevin), Muslimah 'Ali Najee-ullah (Tariq), Ikhlās 'Ali (Ebony), and Sadaqah Ihsaan 'Ali; and four grandchildren: Amirah Aris 'Ali (9); Tanzeelah Bilqis Najee-ullah (5), Yusriyyah Duhaa Najee-ullah (2); and Quddus Abdullah 'Ali Johnson (2 months); a host of nieces and nephews and extended family members. He also leaves behind his beloved congregation at Masjid Jihad, members of the broader Muslim community, and the community at large.

### **Hadith 3, An-Nawwawi's Forty Hadith:**

On the authority of Abdullah, the son of Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra), who said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say, "Islam has been built on five [pillars]: testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the salah (prayer), paying the zakat (obligatory charity), making the hajj (pilgrimage) to the House, and fasting in Ramadhan." [Bukhari & Muslim]

### **Hadith 40, An-Nawwawi's Forty Hadith:**

On the authority of Abdullah ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) took me by the shoulder and said, "Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a wayfarer." And Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "In the evening do not expect [to live until] the morning, and in the morning do not expect [to live until] the evening. Take [advantage of] your health before times of sickness, and [take advantage of] your life before your death." [Al-Bukhari]

### **Hadith 40, Hadith Qudsi:**

On the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"Allah will say to the inhabitants of Paradise: O inhabitants of Paradise! They will say: O our Lord, we present ourselves and are at Your pleasure, and goodness rests in Your hands. Then He will say: Are you contented? And they will say: And how should we not be contented, O Lord, when You have given to us that which You have given to no one else of Your creation? Then He will say: Would you not like Me to give you something better than that? And they will say: O Lord and what thing is better than that? And He will say: I shall cause My favour to descend upon you and thereafter shall never be displeased with you." It was related by al-Bukhari (also by Muslim and at-Tirmidhi).