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## **CAMPAIGN TO STOP CHILD ABUSE AND TO ENCOURAGE BETTER PARENTING**

### **Don't Be That Parent!**

Every year 3.3 million reports of child abuse are made in the United States involving nearly 6 million children (a report can include multiple children). More than five children die every day because of child abuse in America. We were made very aware last year that this includes Muslim American kids too. Last year, Abdifatah Mohamud, 10, and Khalil Wimes, 6, died due to parental abuse and drew wide-spread media attention too. Project Sakinah is launching this campaign to address the issue of child abuse within the Muslim community.

This document is meant to provide basic information to Imams, writers and other community activists about this issue and our campaign. We hope that they find it helpful in preparing their khutbahs, writing a piece or two, delivering lectures about the issue or in engaging community and family members by other means.

### **Campaign Goals:**

- to raise awareness about child abuse and its consequences within the Muslim American community.
- to encourage people to help stop child abuse through intervention and prevention.
- to encourage parents to improve their own parenting skills through reading articles and books, and taking various classes and workshops.
- to encourage families to seek counseling and other services to resolve conflicts within family members.
- to draw attention to the growing need for Muslim foster parents all over the US as soon as possible to house Muslim children who are taken away from their families for various reasons.

### **Child Abuse in Muslim American Community:**

#### **The Case of Khalil Wimes:**

#### ***Negligence & Abuse, lack of intervention from the family/community***

Khalil Wimes was a six year old boy who died on March 19th, 2012 from horrific abuse and neglect over the course of many years at the hands of his birth parents in Philadelphia. He had been placed in his cousin's care when he was one week old, and he thrived under her love. At age 3, the judge ordered to return him to his birth family—a couple who had already had seven children removed from their care because of neglect and child abuse issues. Both parents were drug addicts

His birth parents, Latiff Hadi and Tina Cuffie (also known as Floyd and Tina Wimes), starved him for three years. They would beat him with whatever they found. They had him in a room that had nothing but a filthy, urine-wet mattress. After his death, doctors found his body covered with a "sea of scars" and wounds. There was no part of his body that was not injured. Both parents were charged with murder last year and they are in prison now awaiting trial. He weighed just 29 pounds—basically the weight of a two year old. He had a Muslim burial—attended by his loving foster mother, Alicia Nixon, and his grandmother, LaReine Nixon.

Khalil's two adult sisters who themselves are mothers reported the details of prolonged abuse after his death. One sister admitted that she did not report abuse because she did not want her mother to lose custody of another child. Khalil's parents had already lost custody of seven other children including these two sisters on the ground of negligence and child abuse.

**Discussion:** Rights of a child, role of community and family members in stopping the abuse and saving a child.

### **The Case of Abdifatah Mohamud:**

#### ***Anger management, effective parenting, abuse, lack of intervention from the family/community, absence of supportive family members for kids***

Abdifatah Mohamud was a smart, handsome 10 year-old Muslim-American boy with a winning smile who was brutally beaten to death by his stepfather on April 17, 2012 in Buffalo, NY. The stepfather claimed that Abdifatah was not doing his homework and had bad grades. School authorities reported that the boy was an "A" student and had no behavior or academic issues. The boy himself called 911 for relief from his stepfather numerous times, and had run away from home to seek help from a neighbor. The neighbor returned him back to the stepdad and he was found dead a few hours later. The brutality of the killing was such that it shocked even veteran police and forensic professionals. His stepfather was found guilty and sentenced to 25 years to life.

**Discussion:** Anger Management is a must. What grades are good enough for a child? What else matters in a child's personality, behavior? Significance of effective parenting vs. abusive parenting. Lack of support system for abused children in our community.

### **Family Violence & Trafficked Muslim Girls:**

In some Muslim-American communities, there have been reports of teenage girls who were burdened by a lot of chores and the responsibilities of caring for younger siblings. They ran away and were picked up by truck drivers who trafficked them. These girls were used by pimps to lure more girls in prostitution. Federal agencies are working on the case.

**Discussion:** We cannot use our daughters as maids and then expect them to obey us forever. Child labor is not a norm in this country. Our children are aware of their rights and they can take any action out of frustration and rebelliousness. Children must be treated with love, mercy and care.

### **Quran & Hadith:**

1. "And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between you; verily, in that are signs for people who reflect." (Qur'an, 30:21)
2. Honor your children and bring them up well. Verily, your children are a gift for you. (*Ibn Majah*).
3. Be equitable among your children when it comes to giving to them. If I were to give preference to anyone, I would give preference to the females. (*Baihaqi*).

4. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) stated, "He is not of us who does not have compassion for his fellow beings".
5. "Fear Allah and treat your children fairly" (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2447; Muslim, 1623).
6. **Treat your children with love and mercy:** Parents have the obligation to show love and mercy to their children. This will help children to develop normal and stable personalities and will also make it easier for children to love and respect their parents and elders when they grow up. Seeing the Prophet kissing his grandson, a person named Alaq'r'a Ibn Habis found this behavior strange and said, "I have ten children, but I have never kissed any of them." The Prophet (s) replied, "**The one who has no compassion will not be treated mercifully**" (Bukhari and At-Tirmidhi).
7. "The best gift to children from parents is their correct training" (Tirmidhi).
8. "Upon death, man's deeds will stop except for three deeds, namely: a continuous charitable fund, endowment or goodwill; knowledge left for people to benefit from; and a pious righteous and God-fearing child who continuously prays to Allah, for the souls of his parents" (Muslim).
9. "Do not raise your children the way your parents raised you; they were born for a different time" - Ali ibn Ta'alib.

## Don't Be That Parent - Parenting Tips

*Note: These tips are provided here just as suggestions. Each one of these has its own complexity and pros and cons. We expect the users of this document to elaborate on these items for the sake of clarity and better understanding, inshaAllah.*

- **Don't be an abusive parent** - Learn to be an effective parent. Yelling and scolding might work sometimes, but they don't nurture the child. Be polite and gentle to your kids, the blessed Prophet, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, was very gentle with children and they loved him and obeyed him.

- **Don't be judgmental** - Try to listen and understand what is going on with your child.

- **Don't mix cultural values with the Islamic values.** Don't impose your cultural values and overseas rules here - You're raising them in America - It's a different culture with different expectations from individuals. Your children do not understand where you are coming from. Learn and practice Islamic values, since Islam is universal and relevant in all times and places.

- **Don't be stubborn and arrogant with your children.** Apologize if it's your mistake. They will respect you more and your relationship will be closer.

- **Don't leave them alone to deal with their schools by themselves.** There are so many challenges in today's schools including bullying, sex, discrimination, etc. etc. that they can easily be lost without your help.

More tips and parenting help on Parent Resource page on our website:

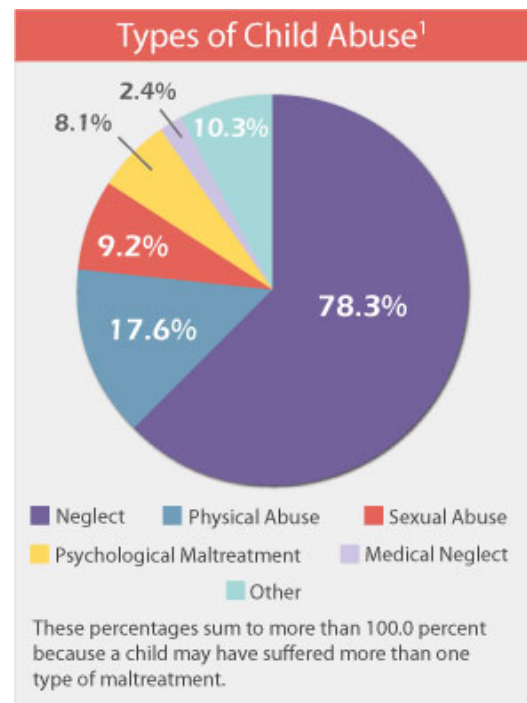
<http://projectsakinah.org/ResourcesTools/ParentResources.aspx>

## Child Abuse in America - Facts:

Source: <http://www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics>

Children are suffering from a hidden epidemic of child abuse and neglect.

- Every year 3.3 million reports of child abuse are made in the United States involving nearly 6 million children.
- A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds.
- More than five children die every day as a result of child abuse.
- Approximately 80% of children that die from abuse are under the age of 4.
- It is estimated that between 50-60% of child fatalities are due to maltreatment are not recorded as such on death certificates.
- More than 90% of juvenile sexual abuse victims know their perpetrator in some way.
- Child abuse occurs at every socioeconomic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions and at all levels of education.
- About 30% of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children, continuing the horrible cycle of abuse.
- About 80% of 21 year olds that were abused as children met criteria for at least one psychological disorder.
- The estimated annual cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States for 2008 is \$124 billion.



## Child Abuse & Consequences

### Child Abuse and Custody Issues

One of the major consequence of child abuse is the loss of custody. In the absence of Muslim foster parents in America, most of our children are then placed with non-Muslim foster parents.

### Child Abuse & Criminal Behavior

- **14% of all men in prison** in the USA were abused as children.
- **36% of all women in prison** were abused as children.
- Children who experience child abuse & neglect are **59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.**

### Child Abuse & Sexual Behavior

- Abused children are **25% more likely to experience teen pregnancy.**
- Abused teens are **less likely** to practice safe sex, putting them at greater risk for STDs.

### Child Abuse & Substance Abuse

- **One-third to two-thirds** of child maltreatment cases **involve substance** use to some degree.
- Children whose parents abuse alcohol and other drugs are **three times more likely to be abused** and more than four times more likely to be neglected than children from non-abusing families.
- As many as **two-thirds of the people in treatment for drug abuse** reported being abused or neglected as children.