



## Teacher/Viewing Guide

### Arab American Stories – Episode 107

Imam Taha A. Tawil

Imam of the Mother Mosque

**Grade Level: 9-12**

#### Episode Overview:

Imam Taha A. Tawil is the Imam of the oldest mosque built in America, known as “the Mother Mosque,” located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, which was dedicated in February of 1934. The mosque was built by the early local Arab American community, but over the years the surrounding neighborhood has changed and the mosque now serves Muslims of diverse ethnic origins. Imam Tawil came to America from Jerusalem in 1983 and has worked with this diverse congregation ever since. He also serves as chaplain for the police department and at the local prison spreading his message of personal dignity and morality. Imam Tawil’s message is that all religions teach the same basic ideas of unity and human decency, and that Islam is no different in its basic teachings and values than other religions practiced in America. He stresses the importance of the individual and the mission of the Prophet in Islam to build a well-balanced human. Cedar Rapids is a peaceful and tolerant community and even after the attacks of 9/11 community members reached out to the Mother Mosque with messages of support.

Other people showcased in the segment talk about Imam Tawil and the way he builds relationships with, and tries to educate, people in the community as the basis for his work. From viewing the segment, students should understand the challenges Imam Tawil faces in trying to convince mainstream America to accept people as individuals first, aside from their religion or ethnicity, and to understand how a positive point of view and genuine love of humanity can help achieve this goal.

#### Previewing Questions:

1. Where do you think most Arab Americans live (state or city)?
2. What role does an Imam play in a Mosque? What role in the extended community?
3. What are some effective techniques used in order to change someone’s point of view?

#### Vocabulary:

1. Imam: Muslim religious leader or chief.
2. Chaplain: A member of the clergy who conducts religious services for an institution.
3. Dedication: A ceremony to mark the official completion or opening of something.
4. Diversity: The condition of having or being composed of differing elements or traits.
5. Congregation: A group of people regularly attending a particular place of worship.
6. Tolerance: A fair, objective attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc., differ from one's own.

#### Lesson Overview/Review:

After viewing the segment on Imam Tawil, students should be prepared to brainstorm key words or ideas spoken, or actions demonstrated by Imam Tawil, or others in the video, which illustrate his positive attitude and message.

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**Journal Option:** Have students take a moment to consider a time when they were intolerant of another person. Reflect on why they were intolerant of another person and if they feel their opinion of that person could be changed (or not) and why.

**Post Viewing Class Discussion:** Conduct a short discussion to synthesize the information gained from viewing the video segment. Some possible topics:

1. What new information did you learn about Arab Americans which surprised you?
2. Imam Tawil says that he values above all his freedom and humanity. How are these helping him to fulfill his dream? What is his dream?
3. "If the water drips slowly on the boulder, over time it will split the boulder." Relate this saying to Imam Tawil's style of teaching and success in teaching.
4. Do you think there is truth in Imam Tawil's method to know the person before you try to teach them? Explain.

**Activity: The Value of Diversity** - Students may complete this activity on a worksheet, in notebooks, or in a word processing document. They can complete each task paced with the whole class or on their own time.

**Think and record your answers to the following:**

1. Identify at least three different cliques or groups in your school or community.
2. What traits (style of dress, personality) or actions do people in each group share?
3. Look at what you wrote. Are your assumptions in #2 positive or negative?
4. Do you stand by your assumptions? Why or why not? What could someone, either in that group or outside of it, do to help you to change your point of view?
5. Question for the whole group: What did you learn about your personal point of view? What does it mean to "see" the person and not the group? What is valuable about that point of view?

The goal is to get students to realize that they negatively label other people every day and that through self-analysis they can begin to remedy the situation and see others as people, not just as the group they are in.

Assessment Ideas: Students will be graded on:

1. Participation in class discussion and activity discussion.
2. Completion and quality of answers to questions.

**Explore Online:** Use the following resources to allow your students to further explore the topic and the Arab American community.

1. Arab American Museum: <http://arabamericanmuseum.org/>
2. Teaching Tolerance: <http://www.tolerance.org/>
3. Arab American Antidiscrimination Committee: <http://adc.org/>
4. Mother Mosque of Cedar Rapids: <http://www.mothersmosque.org/>

**Interdisciplinary Options:** Psychology; Sociology, Comparative Religion

In this episode students will see how the ability to see a person for who they are as a human encourages tolerance and peaceful coexistence.



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### Common Core Alignment:

- RI7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- SL4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and that the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.