

**Module 4****Class Title:** Heroes & Stars - Part 3 - (3<sup>rd</sup> part of a 3 lesson series)**Aim of Lesson:** to get inspiration from a contemporary Muslim woman.**Category:** Muslim Heroes**Class Format:** Narration & Discussion

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min As Shaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli*

(Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verses 25-28)

Today we will finish our topic of Heroes & stars *inshaallah*.

Do you remember that last week we saw a little video? It was about the true liberation of women, of mankind. Especially the liberation of women in Islam and how the Western women were manipulated, exploited and brainwashed into doing what they thought was for the rights of women, but actually had nothing to do with women's rights. It was all about getting profits for the tobacco companies.

Today I want to discuss with you someone who started life like one of those brain washed women. She was an American Muslim Amina Assilmi. That's the name she took on when she became a Muslim.

She was one of those women who were right at the front of all this 'feminist movement' and she grew up thinking that it is demeaning if you stay at home and cook for your husband and kids and keep house; that you need to realize your potential, you have to express yourself and you have to have a job outside even if it is serving and waiting on other people's children and husbands in a café or something like that, that's ok as long as you are not doing it in your own home!

She was also a southern 'Baptist'. You know who Baptists are? They are very devout Christians, you know the 'bible belt' as they call it in America (which is the American Midwest), and the people from that area are generally more religiously inclined than the ones in the north and the south.

She was a broadcast journalist and was extremely intelligent and highly motivated. She got scholarships in school, she excelled in all her classes, and she ran a business while she was going to college, competing with other professionals. Getting awards, going to college; she was doing all these things simultaneously because she was so dynamic. And she was earning a lot, because she was working and running her business, she was the sort of person who didn't think twice about money, "Ok, next week I'll just fly to Paris

because I need to get some shoes and everyone knows that the best shoes are available in Paris”. That was the kind of thinking she had, and that was the lifestyle that she had.

And then something happened... which actually started by a computer error and that changed her life forever. This was in 1975, so computers were just beginning to enter mainstream life. I suppose it's hard for you guys to even imagine a life without computers. There was a time when computers were not used at all, and this was just the beginning of the 'computer age'. They were using it for the first time to register the students in their college, in Amina's college. So what happened was that she pre-registered for some course and she then had to go off to another city, Oklahoma for her business. She went off but got delayed there, and when she came back the course had already started two weeks earlier; so she was late joining in. When she got back to college, she realized that there had been some computer error and she had been put into the wrong class. Because classes had already started and it was two weeks into the semester, it was not easy to change; in fact it was impossible. And because she was on scholarship she couldn't drop that class either. It was too late. She thought it was a theater class, so she decided to talk to her teacher and perhaps ask if she could do something other than performing, which she didn't want to do.

When she went into the class however, there was another shock for her, because she found out that the class consisted only of Arabs. She was the only non-Arab in the class. She was just horrified; her instinctive reaction was, “How can I be in this class for a whole semester with these camel jockeys? I'm not going to attend this. I can't take it; forget it, whatever happens to my scholarship.” So she just went home. She was married and her husband was a calm person, so he said, “You know, why don't you think about it and maybe there is something you can do about it, God has His ways and means of doing things and He must have a reason for this happening.” She decided to give it a shot. She thought about it all weekend and then she came to a decision that God had given her a task and that was to convert all these Arabs into Christians.

She decided to make this her mission during the whole semester; to try to convert these Arabs into Christians. Every time she went to class she would discuss Christianity with them and tell them that Jesus is their savior, and they had to accept him as their savior, otherwise they would burn in the fires of hell. The Arabs would smile politely but not convert, so then she thought of another tactic and said, “You know, Jesus loved us all and he went to the cross to save our lives, to save all of us, to expiate our sins.” and they still didn't convert! So finally out of frustration she thought, “I really need to do something about it, I'll read the book of the Muslims,” which is of course the Qur'an “and from their own book I'll find evidence and I'll show them that this is (*na'uzubillah*) a false *deen*, and the Prophet (pbuh) was a false prophet.”

You have to understand that there are lots of misconceptions in the ‘West’ and especially at that time; it was the seventies and like most people, she was convinced of the fact that Islam was extremely oppressive for women and that women have absolutely no rights whatsoever in Islam. They are forced to live a life of subservience, they have no rights as to whom they can marry and of course... that Muslims pray to Muhammad (pbuh) and they were all going to hell. This is how she felt, that’s what she knew about Islam.

So anyway she asked one of the students to give her their holy book that they read. He gave her the Qur’an and he gave her another book on Islam. For one and a half years she did research on these books and she read the Qur’an. She read fifteen other books and went back to the *Qur’an* and she started taking down notes on all the things that she found objectionable, or she questioned or she couldn’t understand. She did all this, thinking now she had ammunition and now she was going to bring out all these arguments and convert all her Arab classmates into Christians.

Subconsciously of course, what was happening was that because of reading and learning so extensively about Islam, she was changing from within. Without her even realizing and knowing, she was undergoing minute changes which her husband saw. She couldn’t see them because she wasn’t even conscious of what was happening to her. E.g. they used to go to a bar every Friday and Saturday, but she wouldn’t want to do that anymore, or go to any party. She stopped drinking, she stopped eating pork. And without even realizing it, she was quieter, more distant. He thought that she had become involved with some other man and that’s why she had changed so much and was moving away from him. Finally when he felt that he just couldn’t take it anymore, he asked her to leave. She was shocked but she couldn’t convince him otherwise, so they separated and she moved out.

However, she still continued studying about Islam, thinking that she was going to convert all the Muslims. Then one day four Arab men came knocking on her door, and her instinctive reaction was that she was outnumbered! They had come in their night gown and pajamas wearing a red and white checkered table cloth on their heads, and she had an instinctive reaction to them. She asked them as to why they were at her door. The first gentleman replied that his name was Abdul-Aziz Sheikh and that he had been informed that she wanted to become a Muslim so he had come to visit her. She was really taken aback and said, “No, of course I don’t want to become a Muslim! I’m a Christian. Why would I want to convert? But you know I do have some questions. Give me some time, I would like to discuss them.” The men came in and said, “Sure, we’ll give you as much time as you want.” She went through the whole list of objections and things that she had written down in her notes and they explained a lot of things to her because as you know nobody had explained these things to her, she had just read about them in books. E.g. you know that there are some things in the Qur’an that have a context and a background that need to be explained. When we read them and we study them then we are told that look

this is what happened, this was at the time of this battle or this happened or that had happened, and this is the reason behind this *ayah* or that *ayah*. That's the way they explained it to her. She said later that when all of this was explained to her it was like a rose opening, petal by petal, until it bloomed to its full glory in front of her. This was because she was finally understanding what had been troubling her. Eventually, after many hours of discussion, she accepted Islam. She became a Muslim in 1977.

If anybody converts to Islam or to any religion, it is very very difficult because there is a lot of persecution for the person who has converted and with religious persecution, there are social pressures and cultural pressures because the family will be outraged and friends and acquaintances will turn against you because you are the one who has changed, nobody else has. They are not going to understand what's going on in your mind and that's what happened to Amina because when she became a Muslim everybody just flipped and her mother said that she thought she was out of her mind and was praying for her every day when she went to church, that she comes out of this temporary insanity that had overcome her." Her sister; who was a psychotherapist, recommended that they put her in an insane asylum because she thought that she had gone crazy and her father, who Amina says was generally a very calm and wise person whom everybody used to go to for advice, took a double barrel shot gun and said, "I'm going to shoot my daughter. Better that she'd be dead rather than burn in the fires of hell for becoming a Muslim." This was what she now had to face!

Hearing it is one thing and having to face so much hostility all the time is another; suddenly your nearest and dearest are your enemies and they are always hostile and shouting at you or explaining to you kindly and gently that, "Look, you've gone mad and it's alright and anybody can go crazy, but it's alright! You can come back to the fold and we are there to help you." It is very difficult to withstand all this, but she stood strong in her faith because now that she had accepted Islam she said, "Once I've accepted it I will not turn back." because now she was convinced that this was the right religion and this was the true path.

She had to face many problems and difficulties, more than most people have to go through. She withstood all that, standing firm, meeting all the challenges, making all the sacrifices and yet taking a positive posture and influencing everyone around her: that's what Islam gave Amina the strength to do. Because when you are a pillar of strength, everyone is drawn to you and you do attract everyone to you.

She started wearing the *hijab*... and of course once you put on the *hijab*... even in our society, you put on a *hijab* and there is a strong reaction against you. People will say weird things to you; and we are supposedly a Muslim country. So you can imagine that this was America in the late seventies and what she had to face was like an avalanche.

Nevertheless, she put on her *hijab* and the first day she went to her office in it, she was told, “Sorry, we can’t accept you.” There and then she was fired! “If you are going to wear this getup you can leave.” She faced a lot of hostility and she could not find a job anywhere. Despite the fact that she had an amazing resume, was extremely intelligent, and highly educated, the minute she would walk in wearing that getup, they would say, “Sorry! We can’t keep you.” They would either make an excuse, or just come right out and say, “No.”

Obviously after a little while, financial problems started, because if you can’t work and you don’t have a job, then what are you going to support yourself on? Your family is not supporting you any more. So that’s another thing that you have to face. Finally with a lot of difficulty she got a job in some small broadcasting station. I think it was journalism that was her field. It was a small radio program and she started to work there. The host of that program was quite eccentric. If he was in the mood, he would talk about the topic they had prepared for that day, otherwise he would talk about something else.

One day he was not in the mood to discuss the script that had been prepared, so he started off on Amina and he actually said this ‘on air’; “I have this colleague, she wears this odd getup which bothers me and I find most irritating.” He was talking on the program, just to get a reaction from the people and they were supposed to phone in and vote whether she should be allowed to keep her job if she wears her *hijab* or not. You know what the shocking thing was? 97% of the men who rang up, voted saying that as long as it is not affecting her job she should be not be judged, in fact she should be allowed to dress as she wants to and 93% of the women who rang up said she should be forced to take off her *hijab*! How dare she wear something like that?

This was something extremely shocking for Amina because she had been fighting for women’s rights and women’s liberation since the sixties. She thought that they had been gaining some ground for equality for women and women rights. As she rightly felt, “This is the real freedom women have that I’m not even allowed to wear a *hijab* if I want to? I’m not allowed to dress the way I need to?” By this time, as she was getting deeper and deeper into Islam, she felt that the *hijab* was a badge of honor for women and not something to be ashamed of. She felt that Muslim women wear the *hijab* because they wish to be identified as Muslims. If a women goes out wearing a *hijab* you’ll know immediately that she is a Muslim. If I wear jeans and a tee-shirt, I can be anybody. I could be from the West or India, a Christian, a Jew, a Buddhist, etc. I’m dressed like anybody off the street. What will make me stand out? The fact that I’m wearing a *hijab*; only then am I identifiable as a Muslim.

How is a nun identified? She’s identified by her wimple and her habit. Otherwise we would have no way of knowing that she is a nun. It is the same thing. She said, “You

know, there are many reasons for wearing a *hijab*, the most important one is that my body is mine, I'm very proud of my body and I'm selfish about it. It's not for everybody to see! I'm not on display so that anyone who passes by can see me. Also the fact that I know my value; I'm somebody who deserves respect. My *hijab* gives me that respect because it creates a barrier, it shows that I'm a Muslim and these are my rights. I will be treated with dignity because Allah (swt) has given me that dignity. Allah (swt) has given me those rights. And that makes me different from other women."

A very important thing that she found; especially in America, was that when she was wearing her *hijab* people would question her about it and that gave her an opportunity to tell them about Islam.

You know what is one of the fundamental things that we Muslims are supposed to do? It is to spread Islam and tell everybody about Islam. Any chance that we get, we should do *da'wah*. She had a very good sense of humor, so she said she always tried to do it with good humor. When people are laughing and smiling and talking, they will react favorably to you, rather than someone coming and as we say in Urdu, "*Aasteenay charha kay*" (with rolled up sleeves) or "*Mukkay bana kay*" (making a fist) like I'm going to fight and punch you. Nobody will be happy with a person like that.

Once she was driving through a state and she stopped at a 'Seven Eleven' store and she was wearing her *hijab*. She walked inside and the woman at the counter said in a very loud voice to her, "What are you?" so she said I just looked around and looked down at myself and said "I'm a woman." But again that woman said, "No, but what are you?" Amina said, "Well, last I looked I was a woman, I still am... Oh you mean my *hijab*? This is what we Muslim women wear." So that woman said, "But you are white." and as she said that, she looked around the store and by chance every other person present there was black... even the customers. She looked at them and looked at her hands and said, "O my God! You are right." That broke the ice and everybody started laughing and she stayed there for two and a half hours; she had just gone in to buy something and she stayed there for two and a half hours, answering and talking to those people. And when she left she gave them numbers of some of the Muslims who lived in that area, and told them that if they had any other questions they could get in touch with them and talk to them and ask them. She said that the greatest thing was that a few years later she met that woman again, the same woman who served at that 'Seven Eleven' store and she had become a Muslim! She was getting married to one of those other black customers who had been there at the store that day, who had also become a Muslim. So she said, "You never know how your little action can change lives if you handle a situation sensibly."

When she had just started, Amina had no job, no friends, no family, but one of her greatest sacrifices was yet to come, because you know once one spouse becomes a

Muslim and the other (the husband or the wife) has not converted, that marriage is annulled. Her divorce was now inevitable because she had become a Muslim and her husband had not... and that was very difficult for her because she loved her husband! She also had two small children; a son and a daughter. At the time of the divorce they were too small, she should have been given custody, but in gross violation of her rights, because she was a Muslim, the judge awarded the rights to her husband. The custody of her children was given to her husband. She was not deemed fit enough, responsible enough to bring up her children. However, before awarding the children to the husband, the judge gave her twenty minutes to decide; if she renounced Islam and said that she would not be a Muslim anymore then everything would be fine and she could keep her kids but if she did not give up Islam, her children would be taken away from her and they would be given to her husband. She had twenty minutes to make this terrible decision. That was one of the worst nightmares that anybody, any mother can imagine; being asked to give up her children! She did think about it, she thought she could have lied about it, but then she said, "How could I keep the truth away from my children, and live the life of a hypocrite?" It wasn't as if they would have given the children to her just like that, they would have kept tabs on her. They have social services and they have workers who come and check on people, like in the case of divorced parents, and she would have had to keep pretending that she was not a Muslim. She said that this was not possible.

She said, "How could I deny Allah (swt), knowing the truth? How could I say that I'm not a Muslim anymore and keep on pretending for the sake of my children? No, that's the worst thing I can do for my children; how can I teach them about Islam, how will they learn to love Allah (swt), if they see me deny Him at the first opportunity?" She decided to retain Islam and said, "I will not give up my religion." So both her children were taken away from her and they were given to her husband. She said, and I'll quote her words, "I left the court knowing that life without my babies would be very difficult. My heart bled even though I knew inside that I've done the right thing." You know what comforted her? She remembered a verse from the Qur'an and that verse was the *ayat-al-kursi*.

You all know the *ayat-al-kursi*, do you know the meaning of *ayat-al-kursi*? It is all about the qualities of Allah (swt). It is in (Surah Al Baqarah 2: Verse 255)

"There's no God but He the Living and the Subsisting, the Eternal, no slumber can seize Him nor sleep, His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there who can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what appears to His creatures as before or behind them. And nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth and He feels no fatigue in caring and preserving them for He is the Most High and the Most Supreme."

So she thought of this verse, and she thought that Allah (swt) is ‘All Seeing’, ‘All Preserving’. He is ‘the Greatest’ and He will look after my children. And He will maybe return them to me one day. And because her faith was so strong... that is exactly what happened! They did come back to her. After some years she fought her case again, they were living in Colorado at that time; and she appealed to the justice courts over there and she took her case to the media. Although she didn’t get custody of her children at that point, what happened was that they did make a change in the law of Colorado that one cannot be denied custody of their children because of their religion. So at least for other people, life became easier.

By accepting Islam she had changed so much and you know when you give up so much for Allah (swt)’s sake then Allah’s (swt) mercy and His love showers upon you and He loves you more. You attract people and you become like a touch stone of Islam. She drew people wherever she went. I met her once; she came to Pakistan many years ago in the 90s. I cannot even begin to explain to you her presence, how charismatic she was and when she spoke, no matter what she said, you just wanted to go on listening to her, to what she was saying. It was really one of the most beautiful experiences meeting her; we learned so much from her.

As a Muslim, there are so many rights required of you: for your relatives, your friends and everybody, you are taught this in Islam. Despite her family’s initial reaction, because of course they had been very hostile in the beginning, they slowly started getting in touch with her and they did slowly change their attitude towards her because she didn’t give up.

Islam also says that you must keep meeting your relatives, especially your parents and your siblings even if they are not Muslims and you must have good relations with them. She would thus send them cards on different occasions and she would always write a verse or a *hadith* on the card without giving the source, without saying anything, just a beautiful verse or *hadith*. Slowly as they were reading those cards, they were unknowingly learning about the religion a little bit at a time and slowly it was having a positive influence on all of them. The first person to convert was her grandmother who was a hundred years old. Can you imagine that, she rang her up one day and she said, “I want you to come over.” And she converted to Islam! She died just shortly after that; can you imagine, she went to her grave washed of all her sins! After that her father became a Muslim! The same father who wanted to shoot her dead with a double barreled shot gun! And two years later her mother called her and said, “You know, I really appreciate your faith and I hope that you will carry on.” After a few years she rang her up again and asked, “What do you need to know to become a Muslim?” Amina replied, “You just have to basically believe that there is One God and Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger.” Her mother said, “Well any fool knows that, what else do you need to

know?" So she said "Well if you believe that then you are a Muslim." So her mother said "Ok but lets not tell your father yet."

Her parents were divorced and her mother had remarried, what she didn't realize was that a few weeks earlier Amina's stepfather had also rung up Amina and become a Muslim, but they didn't tell each other and lived together for a long time as Muslims, in secret, without telling each other because they thought that the other was not a Muslim.

You know what they say, that 'truth is stranger than fiction.'

All these events really happened!! This is all true; I'm not making any of this up. In fact you can go on 'youtube' and you can 'google' all this up as well.

Then when her son grew up, he also became a Muslim and her husband whom she had adored and who had left her because she had converted to Islam 16 years ago, also became a Muslim! Slowly all the people around her converted and became Muslims. When she came to Pakistan she was married to another gentleman and she had a little son by him.

Her ex-husband converted because his son and daughter would meet their mother and they were changing and he was seeing the changes. It had its effect and that's why he also converted. So anyway life started to become a little easier now and there was more acceptance and people loved her and she had friends and wherever she went she was now well known. She became the president of 'The international union of Muslim women in America'. So she did a lot of things for Islam and women.

It was still difficult however and she still had to face lots of hostility. By this time it was the 1980s and at that time America bombed Libya and suddenly it was like 9/11. You must have heard about 9/11 and what happened to the Muslims in America after 9/11. I don't need to tell you all that.

It was like that in the 80s when America bombed Libya. It was America's decision to fight Libya but what happened was that suddenly all the Muslims living in America, even if they were Americans by birth, became the enemies. They had to face a lot of violence and Amina's younger son, who was in school at that time, was beaten up by a group of older boys. He was beaten so much that he almost died. Finally a grown up woman, some mother came and she prized them off that boy and saved him. The school authorities did not take notice of any of this; they did not punish those school bullies, because the woman who had seen that and stopped them from beating up this child was also a Muslim and she was in *hijab*. So the school authority said, "We don't know if you are telling the truth or not; we can't be sure." The fact that this child was half dead and hospitalized was

not evidence enough! This is the kind of attitude that they had to face, this is the kind of attitude which Muslims still have to face over there after 9/11.

If you read the newspapers, you'll know that this is what's happening all over; in France etc. People there can't just get up and leave everything and walk away and that is their *jihad*. They are Americans, she was an American, she was born and brought up there, and her family was there. She couldn't leave them all and come away to some other place, could she? Although a lot of people did leave and go back to their own country. A lot of Muslims left America after 9/11. They did that but it is not easy for everybody to do so. In France they have to face a lot of anti-Muslim feelings. They are not allowed to wear the *niqab*, there's been so much protest and such a problem for the women who are doing it, but everybody can't get up and leave France. All the persecuted Muslims are sticking it out over there and wearing their *hijabs* and doing whatever they can for Islam in any way they can.

Anyway, to get back to Amina; as if all that had happened to her was not enough, Amina Assilmi got cancer! Despite that, her faith remained strong and her love for Allah (swt) with it. She said we must all die but I'm confident that the pain I'm receiving contains blessings. And she told somebody, I heard this story from someone else who met Amina when she was recovering from her cancer, she said when she had cancer she was in so much pain that she had bandages on all the fingers of her hands because she couldn't bear to touch anybody! And despite that, she told this lady, "You know I've been so blessed, Allah (swt) has been so kind, and I've met such wonderful people through my illness." So that is the positive outlook of a true Muslim. That's what you have to do. To have such a positive attitude no matter what happens! She survived the cancer.

She especially mentions a friend of hers who died of cancer in his twenties and she said that shortly before he died, he told her that Allah (swt) is so Truly Merciful, and at this point he was in unbelievable anguish... this gentleman who was dying, was radiating with Allah's (swt) love. He said Allah (swt) intended that he enter paradise with a clean book, which is why He had sent him this pain.

Remember this, if you do *sabr* when you are in pain, even if you have a headache or if you have fever and you are not feeling well of course you should tell your mother first that you are not feeling well so she could give you some medication, but if you do *sabr* as well and you don't keep whining, moaning and groaning about it (and being a general nuisance), your bad deeds will be washed away. Allah (swt) will lessen your bad deeds, and we all have a lot of bad deeds to wash away. So this is a way of cleansing yourself. And this is the way they looked at it; so everything became a learning experience for her about Allah (swt) and that is how it should be with all us Muslims.

Amina said about Muslim reverts, that if you teach yourself about Allah's (swt) attributes, then submission becomes second nature. If you know what Allah (swt) is all about, what are His attributes, what does He mean to us, what does He do for us, if you know the meanings of all the names of Allah (swt), the ninety-nine names of Allah (swt), think about what they actually mean. Knowing the meaning is one thing, Ok 'Ar-Rahman', is 'Most Merciful' right, you know that but to think about what it actually means to you, that He is Merciful? How is He being merciful to me, personally? Then it is easy to submit to Allah (swt), then you feel the love growing for Him inside you. And you know this is very common, especially among new Muslims, people who have converted.

There was another lady that I met who was also a reverted Muslim and she was telling us about how she had converted and one of the things that she told me that I've never forgotten was; "You know I look at the Qur'an and I think what a miracle this is!" And she had a book in her hand and she said, "You know I just look at it and I keep stroking it and I say to Allah (swt) You have sent this to me, this is a present for me, this book is talking to me." This is the attitude that you should have; this is the way one should think about it! Not that, you know Ok this is the Qur'an and I must kiss it and put it away and that's it, and we must be very careful and we don't touch it without *wudu* etc."

One more story I would like to tell you about Amina Asilmi is that when she came to Pakistan, she came to Lahore and among other things there was a 'Question and Answer session' and this lady got up and said, "You know Amina it is very cold over here in Lahore in the winter and when I have to get up for *fajar* I find it very difficult to do *wudu*"

All of us were cringing inside, thinking, "Is that a question to ask?" Here she was, telling us all these amazing things about herself and you are coming up with this? But Amina smiled very sweetly and said, "I'll tell you something, I'm half 'Cherokee Indian, red Indian' from my mom's side of the family, and I go to this Indian resort for holidays, it is very primitive over there. There is no running water where we stay, so I have to fill water in a bucket and bring it in at night from the well or the lake, where ever they get it from. And it is so cold over there that when I get up for *fajar* in the morning there is a layer of ice on that bucket. I have to break that ice to get out the water under the ice to do my *wudu*, and I do it because I am so grateful to Allah (swt) for giving me Islam and for teaching me... that this is the least I can do!" And that's all she said.

I don't know about that lady whether she felt anything or not but I can tell you about myself, that I felt so ashamed about myself at that point, because that is true... we do feel lazy. I used to feel awful getting up in the morning and doing *wudu* with that near freezing cold water, but after that, every time I felt like that I would think, "If she could

do *wudu* with that icy cold water, surely it's not going to kill me if I do *wudu* with this water coming from the tap."

So it is just a matter of perspective, adjusting the way you look at things. And after all these things, having suffered so much, having gone through so many experiences, what Amina said was that "I'm very glad that I'm a Muslim. Islam is my life. Islam is the beat of my heart. Islam is the blood that goes through my veins. Islam is my strength. Islam is my life. It is so wonderful and beautiful. Without Islam I'm nothing and should Allah (swt) ever turn His magnificent face from me I could not survive."

When you fully practice what you preach, then your words have tremendous impact on your listeners.

Finally, last year in March 2010, she was coming home from a lecture that she had given in New York and her son was driving the car. There was an accident in which she died. Her son was injured, but she died. She was sixty-five years old at that time.

So that is the story of Amina Assilmi, a national Muslim community activist, scholar, author and advocate for women's rights.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbullzzati 'ammayasifunwasalamun 'alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*