

*In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful*

Asalaamu alaykum, brothers and sisters. Over the past month, I have been reaching out to friends, elders, and community leaders to tell them what I now want to share with you, the broader Muslim community.

Before I start, I know that many of you will feel hurt by what I am about to share. I cannot change the past, but I have been trying to do everything I can to make things right for the sake of Allah SWT. Telling the truth is an important step in that process. So, right now, I want to tell you the truth and then continue doing everything I can to help right the wrong that I did.

This is my story. By the grace of Allah, I accepted Islam at the age of 21 in 1994. Like many converts to Islam, I harnessed my unique background to try to educate people of other faiths about Islam and Muslims. That was especially true after 9/11. I volunteered my time to build bridges between ideologues on the right and left. I had made many inroads with media outlets (Washington Post, New York Times and NPR), politicians, religious and community leaders.

Alhamdulillah, my volunteer work had been successful reaching across ideological lines: converts and born-Muslims, Black American Muslims and other American Muslims, conservatives and liberals, alike. The relationships I helped build led to better understanding between opposing views. News outlets and other organizations were getting a better and a more accurate characterization of the American Muslim community.

So all of this begs the question, how did someone like me get involved in IPT?

In 2008, Steven Emerson approached me to discuss my articles and essays about Islam. I was always willing to talk to the other side, especially people who didn't understand Islam. Emerson expressed appreciation for my writing and claimed that his issue was only with "extremists." I defended the community and emphasized that Islamophobic conspiracy theories about American Muslims were unfounded.

Only later did IPT make their pitch: would I be willing to prove that Muslims don't pose any threat by providing information about the inner workings of the community? Specifically, Emerson wanted me to give IPT a "who's who" of the community and record public and private events with prominent leaders and organizations. And IPT was willing to pay me to do it.

If Emerson had presented this idea to me at any other time in my life, I hope that I would have been outraged, rejected it outright and exposed his attempt to spy on the community. But around this time, I was going through a personal crisis in my life and experiencing extreme financial difficulty amid the economic recession. It was a very dark time for me and my family, and I was too embarrassed to ask anyone for help.

So how was I able to justify this to myself? I told myself that what I was providing was innocuous information that wouldn't hurt anyone. I knew that there were no terrorist plots or other conspiracies for Emerson to uncover within the organizations that he was interested in, which is why people like him came up empty in spite of all their claims.

To be clear, I am not justifying what I did; there is no justification. I am only explaining how I made this terrible decision because the community deserves to know everything. At the time, I figured that this was going to be easy money AND that no one would be hurt along the way. I failed to heed Allah's warning in the Quran: *"Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing."*

For about four years starting in 2008, I provided information to IPT. Emerson used SAE Productions, one of his for-profit companies, to pay me about \$3,000 per month. Looking back on those times, it's now clear to me that Emerson's main goal in spying on Muslims was to protect the Israeli government; essentially, to ensure there would never be a "Muslim AIPAC" to challenge U.S. support for Israel.

I quit working with IPT back in 2012, asked Allah SWT for forgiveness, and never did anything with or for Steven Emerson again. I also hoped that this dark time of my life would stay in the past.

In the ten years after I stopped helping IPT, I tried to keep my distance from the community, quite honestly because of my own shame. Believe me, this is not something that I wanted to ever talk about with the community. Brothers anywhere you ask will tell you that I have been aloof for years now. I did not want to admit any of this earlier because I was content to quietly live out my life completely outside of the spotlight or community life other than my religious obligations.

Last month, when I heard the news that Romin Iqbal was spying on CAIR for IPT, I knew that I had an obligation to come forward. No one confronted me. No one asked me to speak out. I did this on my own because I could not, in good conscience, keep quiet anymore. When we unjustly harm other people, asking forgiveness from Allah is part of repentance. So is repairing the damage that we caused.

I have spent the past several weeks directly contacting people in the community whose trust I violated. I have also been doing everything I can to cooperate with CAIR's investigation. I have provided as many details as I can about what Emerson was doing and who he was working with so that CAIR and other organizations can do whatever is appropriate with the information.

I am sorry for what I did, and I apologize to all of you. Again, I know that many brothers and sisters whose friendships I value are not going to forgive me. I understand that 100% and I must be prepared to live with this. I am not asking anyone to trust me again. I just wanted to explain myself and at least ask for forgiveness from those willing to forgive. I only ask that those of you who feel inclined to do so, please make du'aa.

Insha Allah, I will continue to fully cooperate with CAIR and Muslim community leaders as they work to confront IPT and protect the community from harm. Jazakallahu khairyan.

**Tariq Nelson**  
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