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Power of Knowledge vs. Self-Knowledge Production: The Protagonist's Journey towards Embracing Islam in Umm Zakiyyah's If I Should Speak

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Abstract

Islamophobia has been a frequently used concept by non-Muslims who claim to be afraid of Muslims. Islam is misperceived and misunderstood as an oppressive religion; however, Islam's message and teachings have affected a significant number of non-Muslims all around the world. Consequently, many such people have converted to Islam, particularly women. This study addresses the story of Umm Zakiyyah's If I Should Speak (2000). The story is about a Christian black American, Tamika Douglass, who was influenced by the media and her parents in prejudging and perceiving Islam. However, she started to change her perceptions of Islam after she had comprehensively

studied the religion and consequently embraced Islam. This study aims to first analyse some essential terms such as power and (self)- knowledge, and then explore the influence of the media on Tamika's attitudes towards Islam. It also investigates how Tamika has become a Muslim after being influenced by Islamic teachings. This research adopts a qualitative research method. It applies a descriptive-theoretical analysis to shape a new understanding and interpretation of the literary text. The study finds that the power of media affects non-Muslims' attitudes negatively, resulting in prejudice and misunderstanding of the faith. The study recommends that self-Islamic knowledge is a key for non-Muslims to understand Islam. Knowledge of the Qur'an in particular is of great benefit for a convert to be guided on the right path. Such a Qur'anic influence could be seen in Umm Zakiyyah's novel. Copyright © IIUM Press

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Islam; media; power of knowledge; prejudice; self-knowledge

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