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How 'Shut Up, Man' and 'Inshallah' became unlikely social media wins for Biden

A memorable one-liner has now become immortalised through dozens of memes and countless tweets



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By Zaib Shadani



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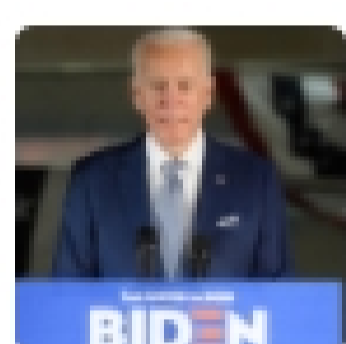
The first presidential debate between U.S. Republican President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden was chaotic and laced with personal attacks, reminiscent at times of a drunken barroom brawl. With accusations flying everywhere Trump continually interrupting Biden, it was still a surprise to hear Biden publicly say what we were all thinking: “Will you shut up, man?”

A memorable one-liner that has now become immortalised through dozens of memes and countless tweets, emerging as the catch phrase for many Biden supporters, including Former White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci, who tweeted: “‘You shut up, man?’ couldn’t have been said any better”.



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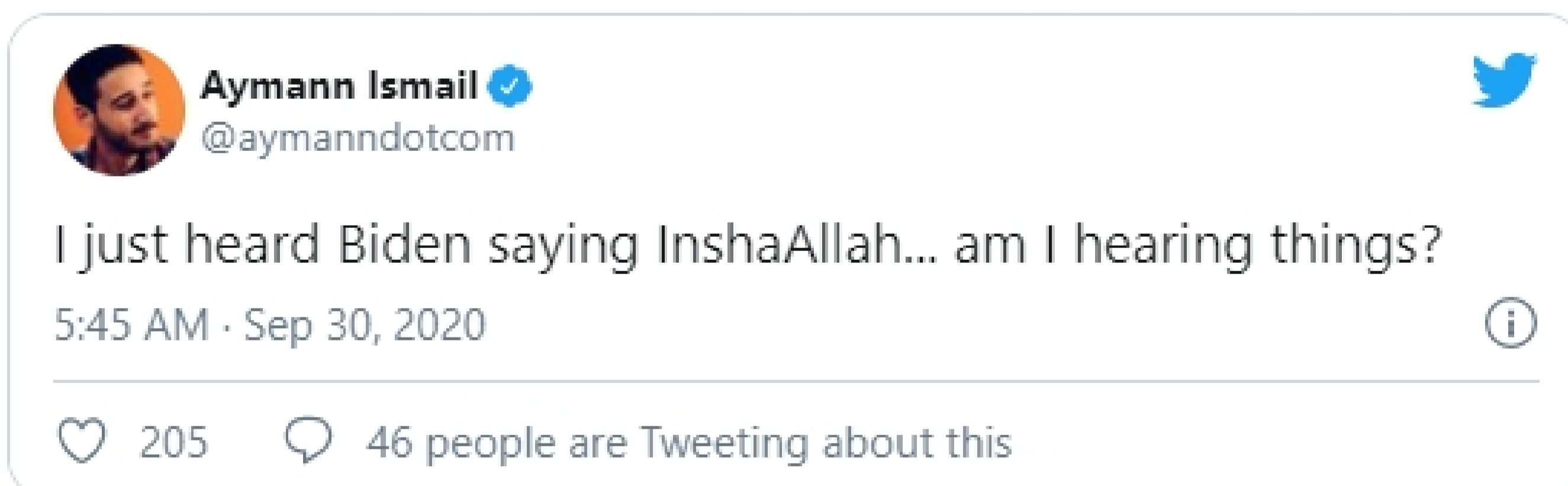
Why Joe Biden's 'Inshallah' has sparked an internet frenzy

In a genius move, the Biden campaign didn’t waste any time and were quick to capital on this viral moment: they started selling T-shirts, with the sentence printed across a grumpy looking Trump, while the debate was still in progress.

An example of a meme-to-merch cycle that was executed at lightning speed, there is no doubt that this will be one of the hottest selling items on the Biden campaign. Available on the Biden Victory Fund’s online site, for \$30 dollars per T-shirt, the campaign has been quick to monetize this memorable line and bring to market, one of the most unforgettable mementos of the 2020 election.

While one may think that it would be difficult for Biden to top this zinger of a line, there was another stand-out moment that sent twitter into an absolute frenzy. Blink and you could have missed it – the moment when Biden sarcastically calls out Donald Trump’s access to his tax returns by saying “*Inshallah*”.

Many (including myself) were left in confusion as to what had actually been uttered it “In July”, “In the law” or one of the most universal Arabic phrases? Biden has been known to stutter and mispronounce words at times, so there was a delayed understanding of what had actually been said. Twitter was alight with people trying figure out if Inshallah had actually been used as a retort by Biden.



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A phrase that is very common for us in the Middle East, meaning “God willing” and associated with a slim chance of something happening, it was like a bolt of lightning when we hear it used during the US presidential debate. Becoming a catalyst for many Muslim Americans to begin their own debate, some saw it as an acknowledgement and nod to the Muslim community, while others have been critical and see it as a derogatory remark that perpetuates cultural stereotypes. Regardless of which side of the coin you identify with, the consensus is that we were all left flabbergasted with the choice of words. A scenario that has resulted in Biden once again, becoming a trending topic of discussion, not only on Twitter, but across the larger media landscape as well.

In a year that has been dubbed the poster child for “unprecedented times” and the gateway to the “new normal”, should we really be surprised that a US presidential hopeful is using Arabic phrases and telling his opponent to “Shut up” on live television? Perhaps it’s time to accept that nothing is truly impossible in 2020 and this is only the beginning of what will be a unique and unforgettable presidential race.

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