



Nation of Islam deserted

About a month ago in a downtown Philadelphia restaurant, two Black American Muslim businessmen locked horns in a hot argument about their faith. One said to the other: "Don't you ever call me Black again, I am a Bilalian and not a Black Muslim; no Black supremacy, I am an American and a citizen of the United States."

When the brother uttered those words, a hush fell over the restaurant. You could have heard a pin drop. This spell was broken by the owner of the restaurant, who happened to be Black and Muslim. She quickly played James Brown's record "Say it loud, I am Black and I'm proud" and Nina Simone's "To be Young, Gifted and Black." Although the restaurant owner had nothing to do with the beef between the two brothers, her playing of the records appeared deliberate and gave an indication of an existing rift in the Black Muslim community. Adeyemi Ademola investigates and reports.



Honorable Elijah Muhammad

From the time of birth until death, there is a concept among Black Americans that remains intact, no matter what: the idea of a Black nation—a mental, if not physical, peaceful environment and atmosphere in which the Black population of the United States could achieve its own identity, develop its own culture, and lay the foundations for a self-respecting productive Black community. Consequently when Elijah Muhammad launched his Islamic religious crusade in 1931 he named it "The Nation of Islam." ❁

❁ But almost from the moment Elijah died and was succeeded by his son Wallace D. Muhammad, the latter had done just about everything to change that concept. Since Wallace assumed the spiritual leadership of the "kingdom" in 1975 he had changed its name from the Nation of Islam to the World Community of Islam In The West (WCITW), and made all followers take on a new name of "Bilalian." ❁

And the fervor for this departure from the hub which had guided the organization for 44 years did not stop



Hon. Elijah Muhammad being laid to rest



with names. There have been, since the death of Elijah, major revisions in the basic concepts and philosophy of the organization. Not only have the members been made to abandon the collective description of "Black Muslims" for Bilalian but White people are now admitted into membership in this once exclusive Black religious organization.

◊ In early February 1977, Wallace brought his reign to another plateau when he announced that the Nation would be going out of business. In a major speech he informed his followers that the organization as a religious institution was going out of the business of managing and conducting profit-making ventures because it is not a business community. "It is a community for the development of the whole society. It is primarily, essentially and by description an Islamic community," he said.

Promptly a good number of Muslim leaders and important ministers objected and loudly protested. In Au-



Wallace D. Muhammad

and it is our responsibility to bring it back."

With these words Farrakhan bade farewell to the World Community of Islam in the West (WCIW) to continue his socio-political activities under the old name of "The Nation of Islam" with the teachings of the Messenger.

◊ Perhaps, the greatest shock to the generality of Black Americans—Muslims as well as non-Muslims—was the changing of the organization's official name from the "Nation of Islam," and the dropping of its ideological nomenclature of "Black Muslim" for "Bilalian."

Black nationalists who for centuries have been striving to create a strong, united and prosperous Black community saw in the Nation of Islam a ful-

fillment of their longing and aspiration. To them the name conveys a vibrating force and meaning which, though invincible, generates an aura and gives a sense of direction. This group is of the opinion that the changing of the name would impart an unfavorable influence to its bearers and a negative vibration to the people surrounding them.

As a former Garveyite put it: "A man with a woman's name, may unconsciously lack the aggressive masculine traits associated with a man's name. Equally a funny or meaningless name may adversely affect its bearer, as he or she may lose a sense of direction and purpose, that would emanate from an appropriate and meaningful name."

A leader of one of the splinter groups who has since established a temple in the old name on the West coast claims that the original name communicates a strong sense of unity.

"Whereas before the emergence of the Nation the individual Black man had felt weak in his life of torment, he found a new consciousness of shared experience; he sees himself as a part of a new community with an unalterable common characteristic. Common beliefs held by members in the Nation of Islam generate a sense of strength and power. For the single individual was no longer pitted against the world but has brothers and sisters who share his beliefs, goals and commitments."

A young non-muslim Black lawyer described the changes as an "abandonment of the social, spiritual, and economic platform of Honorable Elijah Muhammad." He likened the changes and the name to a Baptist becoming a Catholic. Both are Christian yet they differ in their Christian beliefs.

One of the most interesting criticism of the changes and revisions made in Elijah's philosophy, ironically, came from Christians, past and present. Those Christians who had renounced Christianity for Islam under Elijah screamed foul play. If all they had wanted was spiritualism they could have stayed in the religious traditions in which they were born. They did not cross the religious carpet solely upon the belief that they were laying the foundation for a new Black community—the Nation of Islam—where as a racial group they would share a heritage of culture, religion and ethnic identity.

Even other Christians who are not prepared to repudiate the Christian faith for Islam but nevertheless had a



• Silis Muhammad

gust 1977 Silis Muhammad, a former business manager of *Muhammad Speaks* presented Wallace D. Muhammad with a document at Temple No. 2 headquarters in Chicago. The document entitled "Declaration of Spiritual War" charged that Wallace was a "false prophet", commissioned for the destruction of the Nation of Islam so that the prophecy: "the Nation shall fall, then rise again and become greater and be everlasting," might be fulfilled.

The same year Louis Farrakhan, once the top spokesman for the Nation, quit in disgust at the way Wallace was interpreting Elijah's teachings. "Elijah Muhammad had a plan and a program for our people," said Farrakhan. "It is missing today



Louis Farrakhan



significant if silent sympathy for the long range objective of the Nation felt disappointed. For from utterances and activities of the late Elijah Muham-



Chicago's Your Supermarket serving Muslim and Non-Muslim customers

mad, the Nation was to ultimately consist of the entire Black population in the United States, even though for the time being it was exclusively for the adherents of Islam.

To prove their point they called attention to the fact that the various business establishments, conducted Under Elijah's leadership, were not only for Muslims but non-Muslims also. These enterprises were said to be operated not only for the purpose of charging reasonable prices, but for providing fair measures and efficient service not always available to the Black community before the advent of the Nation.

The most pathetic complaints came from the thousands of men and women who were once employed by the Nation's business enterprises. To these people in a country that rapidly sending people to the unemployment office, the discontinuation of businesses by the Nation will cause the demise of the entire Black family in America. As a former employee of Salaam International, Inc. told this writer, "there is nothing wrong in practicing orthodox Islam, but under the present arrangement there is something which doesn't reach the Black community."

"What we want is improved shelter, more food and clothing and to have peace of mind and security in which we can teach our children the right

habits and behavior. Individually the Black man has no capital to do business of any consequence. Now the collective effort built by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the sense of self-help initiated by the Messenger has all been shattered in the name of orthodox Islam." continued the respondent.

Actually what seemed to have bothered some former employees was that that year was one of the best for business. A product, newly-introduced into the market, was rapidly gaining popularity in supermarkets and grocery stores throughout the country. The "Honey Bean Supreme Custard Pie" alone was expected to generate upwards of \$10 million in that year alone. That in addition to the increasing success of the Nation's "South Pacific Hake fish" and the famed Salaam International sardines from Morocco, which thus far has proved to be the mainstay of the corporation.

The toughest criticism levied against the new leadership came from the generality of Black American Muslims who are neither happy with the changes nor feel comfortable with the dropping of the ideological nomenclature of "Black Muslim" for "Bilalian." Names, they contend, not only tell people who they are but also where they came from. Names also speak of history and culture and they are indicators of those who bear them.

Many Muslims are of the opinion that the dropping of the name "Black Muslim," once more robbed them of their identity and threw them back into the drifting ocean of no man's land.

Since the beginning of the rift in 1977 more splinter groups have come into being while the remnant of the main body is growing in strength and prestige. Are the changes and revisions made in the philosophy of the organization and the teachings of its founder by Wallace really a manifestation of realism, or indeed, these changes and revisions are "a betrayal of the Black trust" as claimed by the splinter groups?

To answer this question we must revisit the Nation of Islam and examine the forces which brought it into being. An examination of the goals of the organization under Elijah's leadership—as they have been stated or implied in its literature and public lectures, and as they may be inferred from careful observation and analysis of the behavior, activities of its members may offer some insight.

Genesis

What we now know by both the names of "the Nation of Islam" and "the World Community of Islam in the West" had its beginnings in the ghettos of Detroit. The time was 1930. It was the first year of the Great Depression—a time of hunger, confusion, disillusionment, despair, and discontent.



Children of poor Black sharecroppers



In 1931 shadows hung over the Black ghettos of the United States. Scattered from East to West, North to South, were 17 million Black people wondering adrift in a veritable wasteland like ships long lost at the bottom of the sea.

It is an interesting phenomenon that when a people reached the height of despair, there is so often waiting in the wings a saviour—a messiah to

The Mysterious Peddler

It all began in Detroit, Michigan with a mysterious peddler who later became known as a prophet of Islam. The name of this peddler was W.D. Fard Muhammad. His mission: "to teach Islam to Black Americans."



Southside Chicago ghetto during the 1930's



Fard Muhammad

sick on the streets; some were trying to commit suicide. Alleys were ravaged for food. Many people searched high

Hunger was all about. Evictions were everywhere. People were falling and low looking for staple bread, meatless bones, raw potato peelings, or spoiled vegetables from which to make stew or soup, or image of soup.

So wretched, filthy and poor were Black communities that in some cities twice as many Black babies as white babies were dying. Black death rate exceeded the white birth. Many suffered from heart trouble, high blood pressure and malnutrition, not to mention the day to day sickness and diseases such as fever, headaches, rheumatism, toothaches, etc.

For years Black folks had been waiting for relief without success. The great Marcus Garvey had come and gone; and so had Noble Drew Ali. Both virtuous and dedicated men had tried their best to lift the oppressed Blacks from their terrible situation, but neither was successful. The odds were too great and they both were swept away by the terrible forces of the oppressors.

snatch them back from the edge of an abyss. For Black Americans of the decade of the thirties that saviour was Elijah Muhammad. *



an unemployed Southside resident in 1930's

Detroit in 1930 was the logical place to begin any organization of American Blacks. Within the crowded confines of the Black section of the city, a would-be leader could find support for almost any type of movement. A compact Black ghetto, Detroit at the time had the largest concentration of poor Blacks. Here were to be found representatives of all elements in the Black world: sensitive artists, struggling businessmen, self-anointed preachers, poorly-paid laborers, and ignorant sidewalk loafers.

Among such a disparate people it was easy for an emotional appeal that might otherwise be ignored by a more sophisticated Black community, to find a sympathetic audience. Any movement that addressed itself to the needs of those Blacks who had been left out or deprived of the gratification of material wealth promised in the American dream would certainly make a strong impact among the lower stratum of the community.

Fard began his mission first as a peddler selling among other things, artifacts, beads, Moroccan leather bags and silks on the street corners of Detroit. To attract attention he would tell Black pedestrians as they passed by him that the articles he carried "were the same kind used by their people in "home country, and he him-



self was from there."

At first skeptical Blacks paid scant if any attention to the lanky peddler who claimed to have come from their home country. The sidewalk crowds loitering around the UNIA building on West Lake Street ignored his harangues and dismissed him as just another carpetbagger. Even the presence of African beads and artifacts among Fard's wares failed to arouse more than a casual interest in the peddler.

For one thing, many Black residents of Detroit were leery of the peddler, for he was a man without known friends or relatives and his nationality and racial origin were subject to dispute, all they knew about him is that he called himself Fard Muhammad or Fard Muhammad Ali.

Inevitably a proliferation of legends developed about so mysterious a person. One legend about Fard is that he was a Jamaican born of a Muslim Syrian father. Another described him as a Palestinian Arab. Still another claims he was a Saudi and a son of wealthy parents of the tribe of Koreish—the tribe of Prophet Mo-hammad, founder of classical Islam. Even the Detroit police contributed their own to the exercise. Their record claims that Fard himself told them he was "The Supreme Ruler of the Universe."



Undaunted by this seeming indifference on the part of his future followers Fard adopted another method. He began a door-to-door call ostensibly to sell his wares but in actuality to see the conditions of Blacks in the ghetto and to talk about them. At first Fard's relationship with Detroit's Blacks was casual and informal. He went about his business in an unobtrusive way, sharing whatever they had to offer him.

Initially Fard confined his discussions to his own personal experiences in foreign countries and suggestions for improving the personal health of his listener. Soon his discussions were extended to include rigorous Muslim

prohibitions against dancing, smoking and adultery. He admonished men and women to live soberly and with dignity, to work hard to devote themselves to the welfare of their families and to deal honestly with all men including authorities.

As he got closer and closer to the Black community and people cared less and less about his origin, he came out of his true bag. The peddler condemned the Judeo-Christian teachings. He described Christianity as "a contrivance of the white man designed for the enslavement of non-white people." Instead of responding to the hopes and aspirations of the Black man, Fard declared that the "religion of Christ had helped keep him doped into subservience to the White establishment."

After this Fard's fame spread far and wide. As his following increased he grew bolder in his attacks on the establishment. He condemned the name "negro" as an invention of the white man, designed to separate American Blacks from their Asian brothers and sisters. Specifically he claimed that the Blacks of the United States were not Americans but

truth about the white man and to help them prepare for an impending Armageddon."

Using the Book of Revelations, Fard told his listeners that there would be a total war between good and evil and that this battle would occur at a place he called *Har-Magedon in the plains of Esdraelon*.

But where is *Har-Magedon* and *Esdraelon*, and what has Armageddon war between good and evil got to do with the problems of the Black man in America? To this question Fard was very explicit: the valley of *Esdraelon* represents "the wilderness of North America" and *Har-Magedon* "the United States."



Crowd waiting to hear Fard Muhammad

The battle of Armageddon was to be the Black man's final clash with the white man who had for so long kept him enslaved. To avoid losing the battle, the prophet prescribed Islam as the only solution because "it was the natural religion of the Black man." Only in Islam could he hope to find freedom, justice and equality.

This was the best opportunity Fard had yet had to use his magnetic personality on an American group of that size, and he made the most of it. He swept the audience along with him in an impassioned plea for Blacks "to throw off the white man's religion, because it had not been of service in making better Black communities."

Among the several hundreds of people gathered at the UNIA hall on this particular day was Elijah Poole, the future Messenger of Allah.

Born on October 7, 1887 in Sandersville, Georgia, he was the seventh child of a Baptist preacher who eked out a living on white farms to feed his family of thirteen children. In the early 1920's at the age of 22, Elijah, with a wife and two children, migrated to Detroit in search of a better

"Asians", for their forefathers had been stolen from the Afro-Asian continent by white slavemasters who came in the name of Jesus four centuries ago.

Early in August 1931 Fard startled the Black community of Detroit with the revelation not only of his identity but also of his mission in Black America. He told a crowd of Blacks who had gathered in the old Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) hall at 1841 West, Lake Street, that he was a "prophet of Allah from the holy city of Mecca." His mission, as he described it, was "to make the dead nation in the West; to tell the Black population of the United States the



life and expanded economic opportunity. Like millions of other southern Blacks who had migrated northward, Young Elijah soon discovered that the bright promise of the north had failed. He was confounded and bewildered by the Depression which had gripped America.

In the midst of great disillusionment and Elijah's groping to find a way-out of the overwhelming hell which had engulfed him and his people, a friend came to tell him about Marcus Garvey who was scheduled to speak in Chicago.



Marcus Garvey

Elijah travelled the more than 200 miles to Chicago to see the "Black Moses" and to hear him talk. As Elijah himself explained: "We walked down 13th Street to 12th and Morgan. We saw groups of people going into a hall. We walked up to some of

the men who were standing on the outside and asked them if there was going to be any speaking there that afternoon. They said 'yes, there is a man speaking up there now.' Upon hearing this we entered the hall from the ground floor and walked up one flight. There we saw Marcus Garvey standing before a large gathering of people."

He had just begun speaking. The first thing Elijah heard him say was: "Awake you sons and daughters of Africa on the continent and in lands of exile. Up, you mighty race! Man can accomplish what you will!" This racial sentiment quickly captivated Elijah.

Garvey's ideology was both nationalist and racial. His principal objective was the redemption of Africa "for Africans abroad and at home." He advocated racial purity, racial integrity and racial harmony. The major instrument for the achievement of these objectives was economic cooperation through racial solidarity.

Certainly Elijah was fascinated by what he called "the great truth" in Garvey's statement.

Certainly Elijah was fascinated and he became a Garveyite. He was made a corporal in the Chicago division of the UNIA. From that day on he was a dedicated apostle of Garveyism until his death.

It was no accident that he should be attracted to Fard. Since the deportation of Garvey from the United States in 1927 the prophet was the only man who spoke the language of the ordinary men on the street. Fard's expressions such as: "Black man", "Original Man," "Grafted Man," "The White man is a devil" and "Cave man" fascinated him.

From Elijah's perspective, Fard's attacks on the whites as "devils' had a li-

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Crowd waiting to hear Marcus Garvey



teral meaning since the oppression of Blacks by whites was a historical reality. He saw similarities between Fard's and Garvey's mission. Both of them came for the purpose of awakening the great mass of American Blacks to the truth about their heritage and destiny.

Garvey warned the Black man about being subservient to the white through the worship of his white God. Fard came to tell the Black man about his true religion—Islam. The underline objective of both is the emergence of a united, strong and prosperous Black community built on the concept of self-help.

Elijah became one of the earliest converts of Prophet Fard Muhammad. A son of a Baptist preacher, he renounced Christianity for Islam and dropped the English-American surname of Poole for Kareem. (This was later changed to Muhammad). For the next three years he was a faithful follower and a devoted student of the prophet. Together they established the first temple of Islam in Detroit and the second in Chicago. They also founded a university of Islam.



University of Islam

But it was not in Elijah's make-up, however, to be a follower; if he cannot lead any enterprise to which he devoted his time and talent, he must unconditionally be the second-in-command. Fard himself, no doubt, sensed this; and even though it was his policy to permit his followers to choose from among themselves their own minister, Fard unilaterally picked Elijah as Chief minister and his own deputy. Some members of the group's hierarchy disagreed with the choice but due to the presence of the Prophet there was never an open confrontation.



In September of 1934 prophet W.D. Fard Muhammad vanished as mysteriously as he had arrived, never to be seen again on this side of the universe. The organization lost its vitality. The temple which had claimed 10,000 adherents a year before dwindled to a couple of hundreds. Ideological quarrels broke out in the rank and file of the temple, splitting members into three factions.

A group who had once been under the influence of Noble Drew Ali, the first Black American prophet of Islam and founder of the first Moorish-American Science Temple, broke away to revive the Moorish-American system. Another group dominated by Abdul Muhammad one of Elijah's chief rivals, also split to form a competing group, under the name of Ethiopian Muslim. However the group never lasted.

In 1930 a group of Black Muslims who had once been under the influence of Noble Drew Ali, the first Black American prophet of Islam and founder of the first Moorish-American temple, had come to join the new temple of Islam under Fard. Ali had taught this group that they were Moors whose forebears inhabited Morocco. This meant that they were Moroccans.

Immediately after Fard's disappearance the Moors, who by now had returned to the teachings of Drew Ali, objected to being called Asiatics. They confronted Elijah with the fact that the temple had neither liturgy or song making it no substitute for those who were seeking the old time religion.

Another group had come under the influence of Abdul Muhammad, Elijah's chief rival. This group became known as "Ethiopians" and adopted

the principles of Marcus Garvey as its philosophy.

This left Elijah as the chief minister of the temple of Islam to carry on where the prophet had left off. Meanwhile, the Michigan State Board of Education arrested him on charges of "contributing to the delinquency of minors" for refusing to send his children to public schools. Unable to fight war on two fronts simultaneously, he fled to Chicago.

In Search of An Ideology

Historically, the Nation of Islam may be said to have begun with Fard in 1930; but as a documented reality it came into being in Chicago. It was conceived, born and developed by Elijah Muhammad at Temple No. 2, which has since housed the headquarters of Black Muslims in the United States.

When Elijah had left Detroit for Chicago, he had hoped to find peace in Temple No. 2 which he had helped to found and was composed mainly of his fellow southerners. But to his surprise he found upon arrival that Chicago was just as bad as Detroit. It was beset with ideological quarrels. Every Detroit faction had its counterpart in the Chicago temple. Added to this was another powerful group composing mainly of young Southern nationalists and great admirers of "Black Moses." This group represented a major proportion of the Chicago temple's membership.

Crowded in the city's ghetto, the lives of these young people were uninspiring and they never had an en-



during friendship. Opportunities for moral deterioration and self-debasement were all around them. Only the upwardly mobile, endowed with character and determination could hope to escape from the general indifference of the Black community of the time.

There was a broad conviction among the generality of Muslims in Chicago that the white man had deliberately "written the Black people



Unemployed people near abandoned store

To these unwanted "Dixies" the purpose for becoming Muslim was to be a part of a new community that would provide a vehicle, education and industry through which the Black man could claim his just rights in America. The main objective of the group was the separation of the races, mentally if not physically.

This was in the midst of the great Depression, and the memory of World War I was still fresh in their minds. Over 400,000 Blacks were called upon to serve in the First World War. But when they returned from the service to the country where the bones of their ancestors are buried, all they received was the relegation, once again, to the rank of second-class citizenship.

Nor did they forget that Black Americans fought in the War of Independence, and more so the man whose death six years earlier at the Boston Tea Party set off the chain of events that culminated in that war was a Black man. Blacks who fought in the American Revolution served alongside white soldiers. Many distinguished themselves in the battle and helped to defeat the British troops only to be treated socially by their own country as members of a conquered army. All this had led to the conclusion among average Blacks that the white man in America would never of his own accord accept non-whites as his equal in status and opportunity in the United States.

out of history." The only way they felt they could overcome the social, economic, cultural and psychological environment in which they found themselves in North America was to develop a new morale, economic self-sufficiency and return to the pristine glory of their race. These were the underlying propositions upon which the Nation of Islam was built.

From the experience in Detroit and the general feeling of the followers in Chicago Elijah sensed an eruption of new Black activity pointing out that no one can predict the day, time or place. He quickly realized that if his temple of Islam was to continue he would have to develop a definite ideology and an expressive concept with due consideration to the reality of the options available. After all oppression involves a logic of its own.

Consequently he proceeded to develop an ideology and a philosophy which he was to preach for the next forty years with undiminished zeal and dogged persistency.

Elijah marshalled all his energies towards achieving the wishes and desires of his followers. He proceeded by searching through the concepts and philosophies of past Black leaders who had come before him. The philosophies that actually impressed him were those of Noble Drew Ali and Marcus Garvey.

Noble Drew Ali and Marcus Garvey represent two traditions of Black

Nationalism. Drew Ali was an American citizen. Marcus Garvey was a West Indian. Both were dead, but yet commanded large followings and their teachings and philosophies formed the core of contemporary nationalism.

As a young man Elijah had witnessed the growth and development of Drew Ali's Moorish temple; and he also saw its decline. He was a participant in Garvey's Back to Africa movement and a great admirer of the Jamaican's concept of One God! One Aim! One Destiny! Nevertheless both Drew Ali and Marcus Garvey failed to liberate Black people because their ideologies lack the proper ingredients.

Drew Ali's movement was mostly religious-separatist. The focus of Garvey's UNIA was the political economy of separatism. Since both philosophies still served as psychic monitors of the majority of his followers, Elijah decided to correct Garvey's and Drew Ali's historical mistakes by combining religion with economic, political and social ingredients to achieve his aims and objectives.

Unlike Marcus Garvey, Elijah recognized the inevitable relationship between economic self-sufficiency and socio-political power. Indeed, what Garvey glimpsed in principle, Elijah understood in depth. And with this understanding he set in motion the process which was to culminate into what is known in history as the Nation of Islam in the wilderness of North America.

The choice was not Elijah's. It was an all Black American choice—a deliberate, self-conscious choice which no one, or a group of people can unilaterally reject without betraying the trust of a whole people.



Last of Shanty dwellings in Detroit before their demolition



Elijah, The Prophet

"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the Dreadful day of the Lord; and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their father, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

When Elijah was born a perceptive paternal grandfather had given him the name Elijah and always addressed him as "Elijah, the prophet." He often told the boy's parents that one day he would be a prophet of God. The grandfather was correct. His grandson lived to become a prophet and the "Last Messenger of Allah."

In 1938 Elijah began his evangelical career in earnest. He invaded the Black ghetto of Chicago. Like his Master Fard, he made house-to-house calls talking to men and women about Islam and the need for an economically viable community.

"Now is the time to plant seeds, to organize and prepare to evolve a new sense of Manifest destiny, and awareness of an impending social cataclysm in which you would figure prominently. It is high time for us to awake out of our sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light," he would tell his listeners.

Next he launched an open door lecture junket, travelling from state to state to spread the word about the Nation of Islam. In one of these lecture travels Elijah presented the concept and philosophy of this nation he was about to build. He told a gathering of more than 2000 Black Americans, "that for a people to amount to anything, it is necessary to have a nationality and a land." "North America," he said, "is only an extension of the continent of Africa. We, the Black tribe of Shabazz now inhabiting the Western hemisphere should strive to build here in the wilderness of North America a nation of Islam, wherein we will enjoy freedom, fraternity, justice and equality."

His appeal found fertile soil in the minds of his listeners. His concept of a Black nation met their needs and desires. For though this Nation was to be



Hon. Elijah Muhammad, Messenger of Allah

a nation within a nation, the mere fact that they would be laying the foundation for a new Black community where, as a racial group, they would share a common heritage of culture religion and ethnic identity was sufficient enough a reason to renounce Christianity for Islam. After all religion is only a division of life into two divisions: "heaven and hell." "Knowledge of one's identity—one's self, community, nation, religion and God—is the true meaning of resurrection, while ignorance of it signifies hell."



crowds waiting to see Elijah Muhammad

Mal.4:5-6

Elijah became the only voice in the wilderness. There, in the dirty streets and tenements where life was cheap and hope was minimum, where isolation from the common values of society and from the common privilege of citizenship was most acute, the voice of the Messenger did not fall upon deaf ears. So often it was the message directed to the pimps, the prostitutes the con men, the prisoners, ex-convicts, the alcoholics, the addicted and the unemployed, whom the responsible society had forgotten. It was a voice challenging them to recover their self-respect urging them to repudiate white man's culture offering them a God and a Black nation promising that the day will come when they would be masters of their selves.

The time was now set to evolve a new set of religious catholicism and rituals aimed to give a character to the lost-found Nation of Islam. He developed a heavy array of meets, rituals and styles of greeting for his people. In lieu of the cross the focus of Elijah's religious service was a huge blackboard divided into two sections. On one side was a drawing of the American flag with the Christian cross superimposed on it. On this flag was written, "Freedom



justice and equality." Under both flags, running the full length of the blackboard was the somber warning: "Which one will survive the war of Armageddon?"

He patterned the character of his organization after the Marcus Garvey movement. He committed the movement to racial uplift and to the unification of Black people. He founded an inner security organization which he called the "Fruit of Islam." This was also patterned after Marcus Garvey's "Order of Nobility." There were no deputy potentates or high commissioner general, etc. in the ranks of the Fruit of Islam. Nevertheless, Elijah Muhammad was the only ranking Muslim just as Marcus Garvey's title "Provisional President of Africa."

Elijah's next preoccupation was organizing the Blacks for a return to their own religion and their own kind" in fulfillment of the covenant which he believed Allah made with their "Patriarch." The focus of his recruitment was the lower-class Blacks in and around ghettos in the urban north. His candidates were from street corners, prison inmates, and other less fortunate Blacks who were likely to feel acutely the brunt of white racism. The regeneration of criminals and other fallen persons was a prime concern of Elijah and he has an enviable record of success. Quite often the Messenger had rightly claimed that his Nation had done more to clean-up the so-called Negroes than all the churches and social agencies combined.

Of this aspect of Elijah's works the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Corps (SCLC) commended brilliantly: "Black America credited Honorable Elijah Muhammad as being instrumental in reaching into the prisons slums and street corners to capture the tendency for self-destruction through crime, drugs, alcohol, and alienation of many Black men and women. He has managed to make a significant contribution to many people who have tried in a very positive way to make a contribution to their community."

In the hey-day of the sixties James Farmer, the then president of congress of Racial Equality (CORE), who certainly was not an "Elijah lover" also has this to say about the messenger.

"Elijah Muhammad merits respect. Not only because of his insight into the Black psyche, but also because of his success. He had had astounding success in eliminating or reducing

drug addiction, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, and other social ills among Black people, and has had a profound impact on non-members..."

For more than a decade the Nation of Islam was a small highly secretive group known only to Blacks. But following the Supreme Court decision of 1954 rejecting the "separate but equal" doctrine for public schools, its activities and influence expanded immensely. Under Elijah, the Nation spread from the initial temple in Chicago to almost every major city in the country where there was a sizable Black population: In most of these cities there was a temple; in others, where the movement was less strong, there were missions. Where there were no missions, there were likely to be representatives of the Nation who were in contact with the Muslim leadership in nearby cities.

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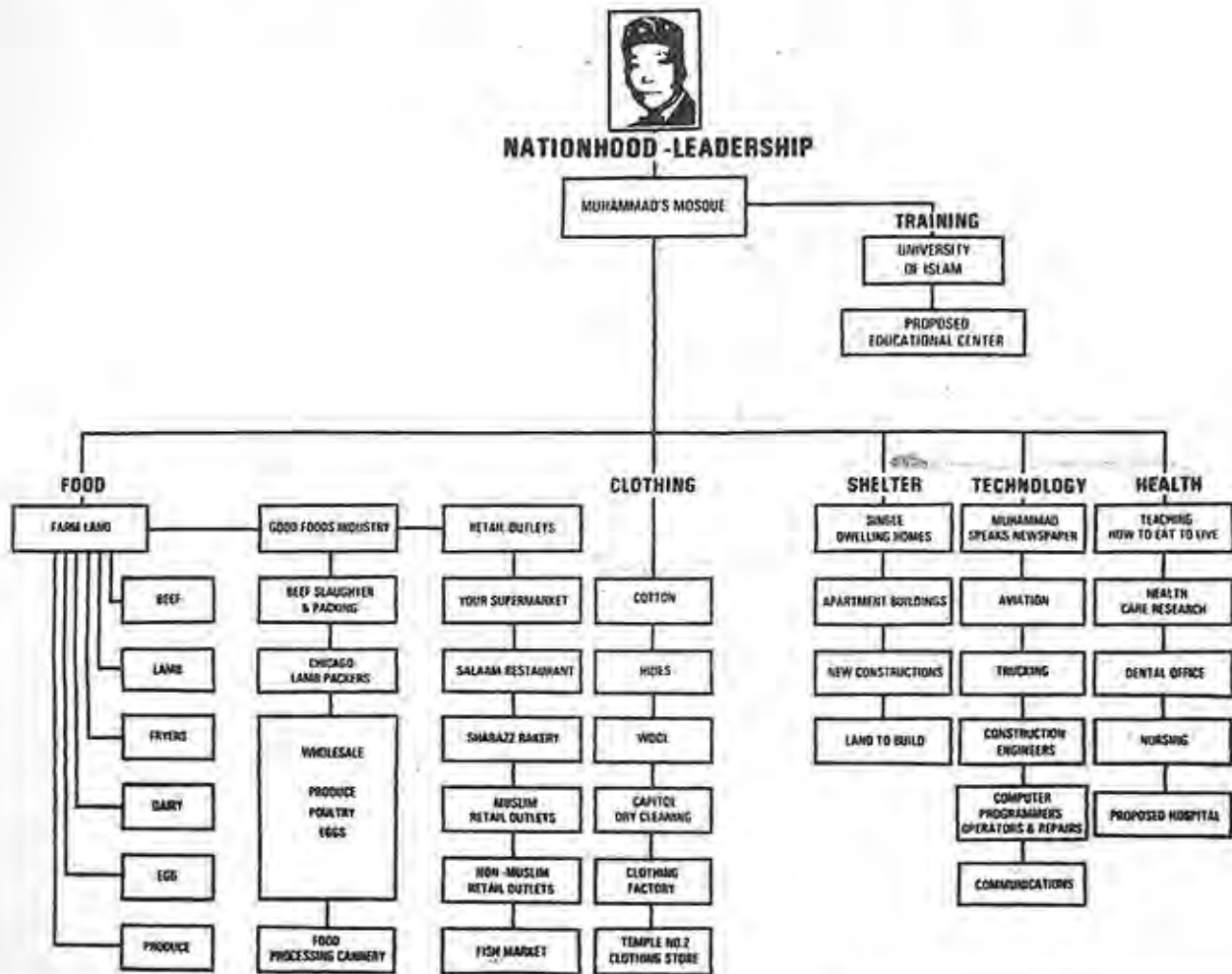
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closed all day Thursday





The Nation Of Islam



Back in 1935 Elijah had assured his followers that "in a few more years the Black man would be his own master. No one knows when the hour cometh. It is in the wind. It is coming. One day, like a storm, it will sweep in like a tidal wave and uplift the Black man." The day came in the years following World War II. He presented the Nation with a blueprint for the organization of the government of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam.

"The solution to the American Negro's dilemma," he declares, "is for the Black man to take the offensive and carry the fight for justice and freedom to the enemy. For no people, oppressed, exploited and discriminated



against, can win a place in the sun on the defensive!"

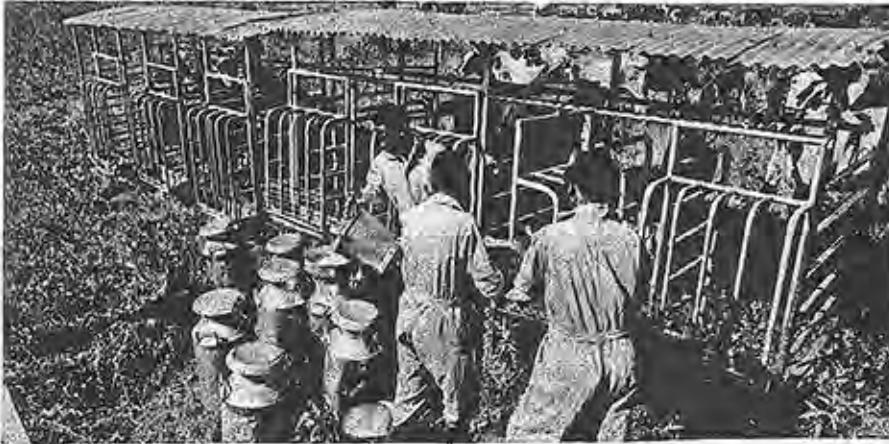
To achieve this end, the Messenger advocated a "united front of Black men of America. The main and basic responsibility for effecting a solution of our problems rest upon ourselves. We should supply the money and pay the price, make the sacrifices and endure the suffering to realize full manhood as Black men."

He launched the Nation on the route to economic self-sufficiency through business enterprises based on a communal system he had invented for making his followers economically secure and prosperous. In one swoop he organized 15 different business es-



establishments ranging from a farm, guest house and dress shop to bakeries and grocery stores.

The Nation's businesses in Chicago



alone included Your Supermarket, Shabazz Grocery, Chicago Lamb Packers, Good Foods, Inc., Shabazz Bakery, Shabazz Restaurant and Salaam Restaurant, Shabazz barber, clothing factory and *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper, now known as *Bilalian News*.

These businesses supplied groceries, meats, bakery products, well-cooked meals and clothing not only to Muslim but to every Black man and woman at reasonable prices. An airplane and a fleet of trucks transported food and the necessities from one end of the United States to the other. *Muhammad Speaks* maintained communication with the rest of the world.

The range of employment offered by these included managers, clerks, secretaries, bakers, cooks, butchers, waiters, seamstresses, tailors, truck drivers, pilots mechanics, mathematicians, accountants, public relations people, technicians, plumbers, carpenters, press men, writers, janitors, lawyers, etc.

These establishments conducted under the symbol of the star and crescent were not operated for profit only. The enterprises, which catered both to Muslims and non-Muslims were operated for the purpose of charging reasonable prices providing fair measures for an efficient services not formerly available to Black people.

The central idea is that Messenger Muhammad had put together a well-organized community which was supported by an equally well-organized employment structure.



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1.

Peace and Salutations.

Dear Readers,

As a point of clarity, understanding that the African Mirror Magazine, Aug/1979, edition was a citation used in Dr. Nafeesha Muhammad's article.

We wish to share with you, if you did not already know, in that particularly article, as well a July/1980, article in the same magazine. Points out the role of the Honorable Silis Muhammad, in the 2nd rise of the teachings of Islam, as given us by the Last Messenger of Allah, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, peace be upon him. It was he alone, who is on record for challenging Wallace D. Muhammad's errant leadership over the people, set about in his written deliverance of a document, titled, "**Declaration of Spiritual War**". He, personally sought to deliver this declaration to Wallace D. Mohammed, Chicago, headquarters, Temple, in Aug, 1977, which is historically recorded in these 2 articles.

Under Wallace, the Nation was destroyed, and those who joined to his side absconded the properties of the believers, simultaneously dashing the hopes of black people across America. The works of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and Lost Found Nation of Islam, was a shining light and a ray of hope on the mountaintop. Which successes, between the periods of 1934 to 1975, are so beautifully highlighted in Dr. Nafessa Muhammad's, article. We thank and commended her for her effort.

After which came the sacrifices of the Honorable Silis Muhammad, to set the ship back on course, causing the 2nd **spiritual** rise of the people, as was foretold by, Messenger Elijah Muhammad, peace be upon him. So that the public can have the correct information and the truth concerning the 2nd rise or birth of the people, and the important part Mr. Muhammad, played in its 2nd resurrection. As a matter of public record, along with Dr. Muhammad's article, we find it ever so fitting to post these (2) historical article to our web site.



2.

The articles are full of information and clears up a lot of misunderstanding and public misinformation out there, with respect to who did what, and when. It is all there. Enjoy!

Feel free to contact us if you have questions, comments, or concerns.

The 5% Righteous Teachers.