Education in the Nation of Islam During the Leadership of Elijah Muhammad, 1935-1975

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EDUCATION IN THE NATION OF ISLAM DURING
THE LEADERSHIP OF ELIJAH MUHAMMAD
1935-1975

BY
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My thanks also goes to Mr. Eddie Washington, who assisted me in the collection of materials and interviews which were relevant to the completion of this study, and to Mrs. Marian E. Robinson, who was particularly generous and patient in proofreading and typing this study.

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PREFACE

The condition of inner-city public education is often discussed by the professional educators, and those interested community members who are effected by public inner-city education, or the lack of it. Often inner-city public schools are compared to schools in other sections of the city, and also to private and parochial schools in the city, and in some cases to schools in the suburbs.

It became apparent to the author that if an improvement was to be made in public inner-city schools, a model must be found within the inner-city environment for possible solutions to the school's problems. Thus, the idea of examining the Black Muslim educational system for possible methods of improving public inner-city schools was born.

The author had observed, from his limited contact with Muslim children, that those elements of discipline and "outward" self control which were lacking in some inner-city school children, appeared to be present in the Muslim children, and observations made from the viewpoint of an "outsider," showed that the Muslim school did not have the same types of educational problems experienced by inner-city public schools, although they were located in the same environment. Therefore, the author felt the Muslim schools could present a model for inner-city public education, or at least
the possibility deserved an investigation.

As a result of the author's participation in the Documentary Research Class, offered by the Educational Foundation Department of Loyola University, Chicago, the idea became a possible research topic. One of the requirements for the course was that each student work out a research proposal. Under the direction of the instructor, Dr. Rosemary Donatelli, and the constructive criticism of the class members, the idea became a research proposal.

The death of Elijah Muhammad ended one phase of the Black Muslim Movement in America, and serves as the basis for this study. While this research is mainly concerned with the educational practices and implications of the Nation of Islam for inner-city public education, an historical treatment of the Black Muslim movement is presented thru its religious, economic and political practices, which represent part of the broad historical effects the movement had on American society in general, and black Americans specifically.
VITA


He obtained his high school education in Bowman High School, Vicksburg, Mississippi. In June, 1958, he received the Bachelor of Arts Degree with a major in Sociology from Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi.

During the ensuing years he taught social studies at the Illinois Children's Hospital School and in elementary and high schools in the Chicago Public School System.

In June, 1967, he was awarded the Masters of Education Degree with a major in School Administration and Supervision from DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

In 1970, he was awarded the Principal's Certificate in the Chicago Public School System and he has worked as an elementary and high school principal.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Few people in this generation have reckoned fully with the religious and economic impact of the late leader of the Nation of Islam--Elijah Muhammad. His passing brought to an end a forty-year reign of one of the most remarkable spiritual leaderships in the Twentieth Century.

The rise of the Nation of Islam is a phenomenon that defies easy explanation. Perhaps, Fisk University's noted scholar, Professor C. Eric Lincoln's interpretation of the black Islamic movement comes nearer to its true meaning than any other attempted assessment. He said that the Black Muslims "represent that segment of the black subculture who, being most deprived of traditional incentives, have finally turned to search for alternatives outside the commonly accepted value structure." ¹

The moral discipline, self-reliance and economic independence that underscored the spirit and aim of the movement brought into play a rare combination of business acumen and religious sagacity. A new frontier came into being whose conquest clothed the concept of black power with the garment

¹Chicago Defender, 1 March 1975, p. 3.
of success. It was an idea that had enough leaven to shape it into a stirring reality. This was the alchemy of religio-economic success that laid the foundation for a new estimate of the place of the black man in America's social structure.

The sense of identity that Elijah Muhammad imparted to his disciples were the high watermarks of a movement that propelled itself without the slick, deceptive rhetoric of the Madison Avenue wizardry. This movement is to date, Black Americans' greatest collective achievement.

"Utopia has long been another name for the unreal and the impossible," said Mumford, who also wrote:

The word "utopia" stands in common usage for the ultimate in human folly or human hope—vain dreams of perfection in a Never-Never Land or rational efforts to remake man's environment and institutions and even his own erring nature, so as to enrich the possibilities of the common life.²

Like Plato, Sir Thomas More, Robert Owen and others, Elijah Muhammad also had visions for black Americans, no less hopeful than those before him who wanted to make life in the community reach much higher levels than it had attained. Muhammad, too, had visions of Utopia.

When one speaks of the "Black Muslims" one is referring to the Nation of Islam. The term Black Muslim was coined by Dr. C. Eric Lincoln while he was preparing his Ph.D. dissertation on the followers of Muhammad. The Muslims do not use the term when speaking of themselves. They call them-

selves "Muslims." However, they do not object to the term employed by Dr. Lincoln.

The Black Muslims were not an isolated phenomenon. Their movement was rooted in the whole structure of racial tension in the United States during the early nineteen thirties, forties and fifties. Briefly, one might look at some of the events in Negro American history which helped to develop the climate for the birth of the Nation of Islam.

In 1895, Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise symbolized a shift from the militant strategy of agitation for equal rights by Negroes, to the conservative philosophy of racial segregation in return for jobs. By this time, however, the victory of the "Demagogue" leaders backed by the southern small farmers, over the well-to-do "Bourbon" planters, who were merchants and industrialists, had created a new racial crisis. The demagogues struck at the Bourbons by disfranchising the Negro through ingenious methods and introduced a rigid Jim Crow system that went far beyond the limited segregation in effect since the Civil War. The savage race riots of 1906 had its full counterpart in the Springfield, Illinois, out-break of 1908. Mob lynching of Negroes had increased rapidly during this period to as many as one hundred a year in 1900.\(^3\)

The American black spent the first half of the Twen-

tieth century adjusting to and recovering from the reality of legalized segregation. Two types of black attitudes were shaped between 1915 and the Second World War. With some exceptions, there was the southern attitude, although more deprived, it was more inspired. This inspiration can be noted by the progress made by southern blacks who were forced to live in a "separate but equal" way of life. The southern black was inspired to use education as a lever of racial progress. The founding of Howard, Fisk and Atlanta Universities gave rise to higher education for blacks in the south. The rise and rule of Booker T. Washington in black education also points out the inspiration which drove southern blacks toward education. Then there was the northern attitude, which was militant, in words if not action. As Lomax points out, "... it is indeed easy to talk loud and bad about the white man when the entire New York City police force stands between you and Mississippi. ..." Thus, the black man's attitude was split into two factions based on overt attitudes toward the white man: the militants and the dociles. With one or two exceptions, black leadership was born and shaped in the South.4

In 1928, the American Communist Party launched an idea of a separate Negro Republic within the United States. For the next six years the Communist Party pushed the idea

of self-determination for Negroes in a forty-ninth state.\^5

The black was no different from any other American in language, culture, or historic tradition, and his chief objection to the idea of a forty-ninth state was its underlying assumption that blacks did not and could not fit into American life. Little did one know that in less than ten years, a movement would start which would advocate such a plan.

In the presidential election of 1932 blacks overwhelmingly supported the democratic standard bearer, Franklin D. Roosevelt, helping to make Hoover a one-term president. The vote of the blacks in the 1932 election marked the beginning of the black defection from the Republican Party. One reason for the defection was the failure of Hoover to cope with the great depression. Following the collapse of the stock market in October, 1929, some eight months after Hoover had been inaugurated the country went through three years of hard times unprecedented in its history. As the roster of unemployment mounted higher and higher, reaching fifteen million in 1932, blacks were hardest hit. Whites were willing to become street cleaners, bellhops, and redcaps, thus, ousting blacks from such jobs.

With the New Deal programs, which were designed to assist the working classes and the poor, the blacks were a large

bulk of both categories who benefited.

America's entry into World War II presented the black with no problems of divided loyalty or adjustment. He had no historical identification with Germany, Italy or Japan and even before Pearl Harbor had been anti-Hitler, having a natural distaste for the "Master Race" theories of the Nazis. Blacks remembered that when the 1936 Olympic games were held in Berlin, Hitler had left his seat every time a Negro athlete won an event, avoiding the necessity of meeting him. In the fall of 1940, when the national defense program got started ninety percent of the holders of defense contracts used no blacks or confined them to nonskilled or custodial jobs. Job discrimination in the defense industry started strong protest by the black press and black welfare groups. In many cities blacks resorted to picket lines. But perhaps the most effective step was taken by A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Unable to get results from the "conference table method" against employment bias, Randolph proposed a National Negro March on Washington, a direct action by one hundred thousand blacks. The date was set for July 1, 1941. President Roosevelt, faced with the possibility of an embarrassing large-scale demonstration in the nation's capitol, issued on June 25th Executive Order 8802, which officially reaffirmed the government's policy of nondiscrimination in employment. With this order the color bar in employment began to bend.
Noting the changes that had taken place in Africa and in their own country since the end of World War II, most blacks felt that the future in America was not hopeless. But this attitude was not shared by one group, the Black Muslims, who represent the subject of this study.

This study is an examination of the Nation of Islam, better known as the Black Muslims, during the leadership of Elijah Muhammad. The emphasis is being placed on the educational teachings and practices of the Black Muslims as prescribed by Elijah Muhammad. The following general goals are also objectives of this study:

- to provide an historical background of the Nation of Islam from its formation in mid-summer, 1930 to the death of Elijah Muhammad in February, 1975.
- to examine the religious, economic, political and social philosophies and teachings of the Black Muslims under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad.
- to examine the educational system of the Nation of Islam through its educational philosophy, curriculum and methods of instruction.
- to summarize and draw conclusions from these findings which may have implications for inner-city public education.

The methodology used in this study employed historical or documentary procedures, personal interviews and observational techniques. The importance of this study is that it seeks to identify those teachings and practices in education which seem to produce successful results for Muslim schools. In addition, these findings may be given consideration as partial means for improving the education of public school inner-city children.
This introduction has given a brief description of the impact Elijah Muhammad's leadership had on the "utopian" movement of the Black Muslims. Also, some of the Negro historical events which helped create the social, economic and political climate which gave birth to the movement were discussed. Chapter Two will give a brief historical overview of the Nation of Islam. Chapter Three will discuss the religious teachings and practices of the Black Muslims. Chapter Four will discuss the political and economic philosophies of the Black Muslims. Chapter Five will point out the major teachings and practices followed in the Muslims' schools; and Chapter Six will summarize the findings with implications for inner-city public schools.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Nation of Islam owes much of its origin to the religious tradition represented by Noble Drew Ali's Moorish-American Science Temple. Noble Drew Ali was "prophet" and founder of the Moorish Science Temple of America, one of the first black Moslem religious groups formed in Chicago in 1928. The Nation of Islam embodies elements of both the religious and secular traditions in its ideology and practices since Muhammad also acknowledged Marcus Garvey as a forerunner of his movement. But Elijah Muhammad holds that both men failed to bring about the redemption of the race because they did not possess "the key" and because the "time was not ripe." ¹

The Black Muslims prefer to think of themselves as the Nation of Islam (chosen people of the Black World); however, nationalism among blacks is not new with the Black Muslims. From the importation of Africans to America in the fifteenth century to the present day, there have been increasing revolts against the slave system; attempts of blacks to reclaim their African heritage; repeated efforts to resolve for themselves the fundamental problem of identity; and to provide a context

for their moral, cultural, and material advancement within the limits set in America -- they have been struggling for a very basic thing which should have been their birthright -- citizenship.

The Nation of Islam started by directing its message and activities to the black men and women who were farthest down on the social and economic ladder. Instead of fighting for concessions and accommodations within the "American way of life," the Nation of Islam questioned and challenged that way of life and announced they intended to build a better way of life. Essien-Udom quoted Elijah Muhammad who said:

Islam dignifies the blackman, and gives him the desire to clean internally and externally, and to have for the first time a sense of dignity--Elijah Muhammad.2

The historic abuse, degradation, persecution and denial of common opportunities to blacks by White America helped breed the Muslim movement which had its start in the 1930's.

The history of the Black Muslim movement began sometime in the midsummer of 1930, when an amiable but faintly mysterious peddler suddenly appeared in the black ghetto of Detroit. He was thought to be an Arab,3 although his racial and national identity still remains undocumented. He was welcomed into the homes of the culture-hungry blacks who were eager to purchase his silks and artifacts, which he claimed

2Ibid., p. 95.

were like those black people wore in their homeland across the sea.

He came first to our houses selling raincoats and then afterwards, silk. In this way he could get into people's houses, for every woman was eager to see the nice things the peddler had for sale.\(^4\)

The peddler soon began to hold house-to-house meetings because his customers were anxious to learn of their past and learn of the country from which they had come.

At first the "prophet" as he came to be known, confined his teachings to a recitation of his experiences in foreign lands, admonitions against certain foods, and suggestions for improving his listeners' physical health.

... he would eat whatever we had on the table but after the meal he would begin to talk. "Now don't eat this food, it is poison for you. The people in your own country do not eat it ... If you would just live like the people in your home country you would never be sick any more." So we all wanted him to tell us about ourselves and about how we could be free from rheumatism, aches and pains.\(^5\)

He also used the Bible as a textbook to teach about religion—not typical Christianity, but the religion of the black men of Asia and Africa. He used the Bible because it was the only religious book his followers knew. It was not the proper book for the black nation, according to him, but carefully interpreted, it could be made to serve until they were introduced to the Holy Quran.\(^6\)


\(^5\)Ibid.

Before long the house-to-house meetings were inadequate to accommodate all those who wished to hear the prophet. The solution was to rent a hall which they named the Temple of Islam. Thus, the movement which has become known as the Black Muslims was born in Detroit. In late Fall of 1932, the temple's name was changed to Temple No. 1.

Very little was known about the founder of the first temple. Usually he referred to himself as Mr. Farrad Mohammad or Mr. F. Mohammad Ali. He was also known as Professor Ford, Mr. Wali Farrad and W. D. Fard. One of his earliest converts recalls that, on one occasion, the prophet said:

"My name is W. D. Fard, and I come from the Holy City of Mecca. More about myself I will not tell you yet, for the time has not yet come. I am your brother. You have not yet seen me in my royal robes."

It is customary for legends and mysteries to evolve around the religious beliefs of a people when such legends are passed down by word of mouth. Inevitably, there was a proliferation of legends about such a mysterious figure. One such legend was that Fard was a black Jamaican whose father was a Syrian Moslem. Another described him as a Palestinian Arab who had participated in various racial agitations in India, South Africa and London before moving to Detroit. Some of his followers believed him to be the son of wealthy parents of the tribe of Koreish—the tribe of Mohammed, founder of classical Islam.

8 Ibid.
Others said that he was educated at a London university in preparation for a diplomatic career in the service of the kingdom of Hejaz, but that he sacrificed his personal future "to bring freedom, justice and equality to the black men in the wilderness of North America surrounded and robbed completely by the Cave Man." Fard announced himself to the Detroit police as "The Supreme Ruler of the Universe" and at least some of his followers seem to have considered him divine. At the other extreme, a Chicago newspaper which investigated the Black Muslims referred to Fard as "a Turkish-born Nazi agent (who) worked for Hitler in World War II." Fard described himself to his followers as having been sent to "wake" the Black Nation so they could realize the full range of the black man's possibilities, in a world temporarily dominated by the "blue-eyed devils." The blacks became more and more alert to the subtle discrimination they faced in the North, coupled with the fact that the country was in the midst of the Great Depression, helped the starving, overcrowded blacks living in the slums of Detroit (as in other Northern cities) to become increasingly bitter toward whites who seemed to control their lives. The illiterate blacks who heard Fard talk became the followers, as were to be the thousands who pledged themselves to follow his succes-

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9Ibid., p. 897.

sor in years to come.

At first the contact between the blacks in the ghetto and Fard was casual and informal. After a temple had been secured, the house-to-house meetings were discontinued, and a tightly knit organization replaced the informal gatherings. Members were examined before acceptance and were then registered, and a hierarchy was established. At this point some of the followers of the late Noble Drew Ali began to pledge themselves to Fard.

The organizational and instructional expertise were evident even in the sect's formative days Lincoln points this out in his research:

Fard continued to teach his followers about the deceptive character of the white man and to help them re-live, at least in fantasy, the glorious history of black Afro-Asia. An unusually resourceful teacher, he was able to utilize such varied literature as the writings of Joseph F. Rutherford ... the Quran, the Bible ... to bring his people the knowledge of self. All were encouraged to purchase radios so that they could hear the addresses of Rutherford and of Frank Norris, the Baptist fundamentalist.11

To supplement the literature, for the sect, Fard wrote two manuals which are still used in the movement. The Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam, which is transmitted orally and is memorized verbatim by the students at the Movement's schools. Teaching for the Lost Nation of Islam in A Mathematical Way, though it was printed and given to registered Muslims, was printed in Fard's own "Symbolic" language and required his interpretation.

11 Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America, p. 15.
Within three years Fard had developed an organization so effective that he was able to withdraw almost entirely from active leadership. A Minister of Islam was appointed to run the entire organization, aided by a staff of assistant ministers. Each of these men was selected and trained by Fard, who gradually stopped his public appearances and eventually disappeared from the scene.

After Farrad Mohammad's disappearance, the direction of the movement fell to his First Lieutenant, Elijah Muhammad. Born October 10, 1897, the seventh child in a family of twelve, the son of a Baptist minister, Elijah Poole was given the "torch." He was born on a tenant farm in Sandersville, Georgia, and for a time he lived in Atlanta, Georgia. At the age of twenty-two he married Clara Evans at Covedale, Georgia, on March 7, 1919. He migrated with his wife and two children to Detroit in 1923, "after undergoing severe discrimination, sufferings and handicaps in his native state for several years."13

Elijah was said to have held several odd jobs before leaving the South. From 1923 to 1929 he worked in the Chevrolet factory in Detroit, and he was reported to have been on relief there from 1929 to 1931. For a time he was a Baptist minister, but later he became an assistant to Prophet Fard, whom he met in Detroit. He lived in Washington, D. C. between

12Ibid., p. 16.

13U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism, p. 67.
1935 and 1941, and was in prison from 1941 until 1946. He lived in Chicago from 1946, after his release from prison, until his death in 1975.14

It is interesting to note that shortly after Muhammad was named Minister of Islam, Fard vanished as mysteriously as he arrived. However, Elijah Muhammad was almost single-handedly responsible for the deification of Fard and for the perpetuation of his teachings in the early years after Fard disappeared. Fard is honored by Muslims everywhere as the Savior and is celebrated as such every year on his birthday, February 26th.

In the early days there was trouble with the police and local officials in Detroit over the operation of parochial schools for Muslim children. Various interest groups, including the Communist and union-busting elements, tried to use this convenient enclave of Blacks to their advantage. Lincoln points this out in his research:

As early as 1932 the Communist Party attempted to infiltrate the Black Muslim organization and take it over. It was followed by the Japanese, who sought to establish a fifth-column beachhead in the group of the direction of the wily Mayor Takahashi. The mayor tried to persuade the Muslims to swear allegiance to the Mikado and he succeeded in splitting some members of the Movement . . . . By 1934 even the Ethiopians developed a sudden interest in the "Black Nation in the West," one Wyxzewixard S. J. Challouehliczilezese sought to use the Movement to promote various financial schemes in the interest of his native land. Closer to home, America's "union-busting" interest did not hesitate to take advantage of the hunger and poverty of . . . blacks in their

14 Ibid.
war against the C.I.O. All these efforts failed ... but the struggles drained ... much from the Movement.15

After Fard's disappearance the Muslims soon lost their aggressiveness and the Movement, to which Fard had drawn eight thousand members, began to decline in power and size.16 Quarrels broke out, and relative lethargic moderates drove Elijah Muhammad from Detroit to Temple No. 2 in Chicago. There (Chicago) he set up new headquarters and began to reshape the Movement under his own highly militant leadership.17

Although Fard had become identified with Allah, having been thus deified, he was worshipped with prayer and sacrifice. But on the other hand, Muhammad who had served "Allah," naturally assumed the mantle of "Prophet" which "Allah" had worn during his mission in Detroit. Muhammad was eventually referred to as the Prophet, and more often he was referred to as the Messenger of Allah.

From 1942 to 1946, Muhammad was in Federal prison for seditious statements he allegedly made, identifying the Negroes' best interest with a Japanese victory in the Second World War.

The major significant breakthrough in the growth of the Muslims' Movement came in the mid-fifties when Elijah got a column, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks" in the Pittsburg Courier and other Negro newspapers. Thus, the teachings were ex-

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16Ibid.
17Ibid.
panded to all of the large northern cities with large black populations and to many southern cities. When the southern blacks began migrating to the northern cities, "Mr. Muhammad" was somewhat known to them. The extent of this knowledge by migrating southern blacks, and its relationship to the growth of the Movement is an area which merits additional research.

By the time the black press decided to drop his column, his success was already assured by the upsurge in membership; also, the national press began to give the Movement coverage. The coverage from radio, press and television served to attract more people into the Movement.

In 1955 the righteous followers of The Honorable Elijah Muhammad had a desire to see him live in a more comfortable dwelling than that which he had been living. Therefore, they secured for him a dwelling on South Woodlawn Avenue where he lived until his death.18 Muhammad lived a somewhat quiet and secret life except when he made public appearances. He spoke freely with "my dear brother" (those whom he trusted) about his work, his mission, and the plight of the American Negroes, which he felt was the most serious in the world at that time. He felt that the moral level of the Negro masses had degenerated terribly, stating, "You cannot find any other people in the world whose morals are so low."19

Although he attributed much of the conditions of the black man to white oppression, he also scolded blacks for "complacency." Negroes must themselves labor to realize their full statue and identity.20

Muhammad legitimized his leadership by basing it upon history, conditions, and the needs of the blacks of the United States. He referred to himself as "one who has walked in the streets with them, suffered in the hell of North America, was humiliated in the South by the Devils" and who therefore understands fully their conditions. The loyalty which they developed and gave to him, the bounds which binded them to him, were so strong that a few followers feared that the Muslims seemed to worship him rather than Allah.21

In less than thirty years after taking control, Elijah Muhammad had directed and transformed the Movement to a nation-wide sect with mass appeal, one which claims over a quarter-million members in twenty-seven states. The nation is comprised of Muhammad followers, the majority of whom are organized into eighty-five temples in the various states in the United States and two foreign countries.22

Each temple is autonomous, although consultation with the Messenger was highly recommended in matters of general policy. Temples were theoretically equal; and each had di-

20Ibid.
21E. U. Essien-Udom, Black Nationalism, p. 117.
rect access to the Messenger. Some temples may have appeared to be more important than others because of their numerical strength and ability to contribute financially toward the general welfare of the nation. Chicago became headquarters of the nation, and increasingly assumed the character of a Mecca for Muhammad's followers. In Chicago, individuals as well as ministers and officers came to meet the Messenger. However, the ministers and a few other officers were in closer contact with the Prophet than the rest of the followers.

Muhammad appointed all his ministers and those officers who had national responsibilities. The most important officers of a temple were the captains, secretaries, treasurers, and investigators. Their appointments would have to be confirmed by the Messenger. As a general rule each temple had set up for the men an organization called the "Fruit of Islam." However, a newly established temple was not permitted to organize the F.O.I. until two years had passed. The F.O.I. had described itself as a military organization which bears no arms and seems to have no military objectives, since, according to official doctrine, "Allah in His own good time takes the devil off our planet."

Fruit of Islam is the name given to the military training of the men that belong to Islam in North America. This name was given by Allah himself. Of all the planets in the earth, the fruit is the most fabulous, and of all the labors of Islam the F.O.I. is the result. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that the equal of these men is not to be found anywhere.23

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Ideologically, the organization, as Muhammad established it, fitted into the general belief of the Muslims that the nation of Islam is a nation within a nation, and as such must have its own government. This belief was given some semblance of reality in the organization and function of the "Fruit of Islam." The organization made its members feel the "importance" and "serious mission" of the nation. It inspired both respect and fear for those in authority within the nation. As the organization of indoctrinating and disciplining initiates and maintaining their enthusiasm and morale, it was a unique instrument of the Muslim community. Above all, the Muslims felt secure that the nation has an organization to enforce discipline within the ranks and particularly, to protect them against assaults or external threats of violence. Members of the F.O.I. enjoyed a certain amount of prestige within the nation and regarded themselves as protectors of the interest of the nation and especially of the dignity of black womanhood.

The female counterpart to the Fruit of Islam is an organization known as the Moslem Girls' Training and General Civilization Class (M.G.T. - G.C.C.). The G.C.C. designates the older women in the Movement. The organization is headed in each temple by a female captain who received instruction from a female "Supreme Captain" and was responsible to the Messenger through her. Only women who felt that they could participate in all of the activities of the temple were members of the M.G.T. - G.C.C. They were called upon to per-
form any duties within their competence in the temple. They were officers in the temple and servants in the nation. For those women, hygiene and personal cleanliness were emphasized. They were taught reading and writing, history, and domestic science—sewing, cooking, housekeeping, and so forth. They were concerned with the training of good Muslim women, and watched over the conduct and behavior of the female followers. The organization would meet regularly on Thursday evenings; no visitors were allowed. The Fruit of Islam, Moslem Girls' Training and General Civilization Class were very prominent organizations within every Muslim temple.

The Movement under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad had radiated to some thirty states by 1963, with a membership of over 50,000 members. (Perhaps, well over that figure, the actual numbers being kept secret). Bent on becoming economically self-sufficient, the Muslims made it a point to be industrious and thrifty, for their goal was to set up their own stores. They succeeded in rehabilitating those followers who had been drunkards or drug addicts, and they gave to their entire membership a sense of dignity and self-worth. One such example is Malcolm X, who was born Malcolm Little.

Malcolm was born in Omaha, Nebraska on May 19, 1925. A dropout from school at 15, he was convicted of burglary

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and sent to prison in his twenty-first year. There he was converted to the Nation of Islam. When he left prison in 1952, he dedicated himself to building the Black Muslims and adopted the name Malcolm X. He withdrew from that movement in March, 1964, originating first the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and later the non-religious organization of Afro-American Unity. He was assassinated in New York on February 21, 1965.

Malcolm X was at one time, the most popular of the Black Muslim Ministers. In a speech made after his split from the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X said the following:

The thing that you have to understand about those of us in the Black Muslim movement was that all of us believed one hundred percent in the divinity of Elijah Muhammad. . . . we actually believed that God had taught him. . . .

The Muslims were a self-segregating group under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad. Suspicious and distrustful of whites, they wanted a complete separation from them. As a sort of "back pay" for services rendered, they asked that a portion of the United States be set aside for exclusive Negro occupancy. The Muslim belief that, whites and blacks could never get along together was one that most blacks found hard to accept. Those who had worked in Civil Right's movements, or who had ever seen such movements in operation, were well aware of the large measures of support they received from whites. Indeed, in the 1960's many of the Civil Rights

organizations felt a sense of satisfaction that they had become increasingly interracial in character.

Black people could understand, in this writer's judgement, the forces that gave rise to the Black Muslim movement, and could sympathize with the constructive elements of its philosophy. But what the overwhelming majority of blacks wanted was their full rights as American citizens. They, nor this writer, could agree with the Muslim point of view that this was not possible. As Quarles points out:

To most Negroes outside the Muslim movement, the vision of the founders of this republic was still a vital force. Americans to the core, they believed that freedom and equality for all could be achieved in their native land. This belief, they would not easily surrender, for it had been their lodestar.27

The Black Muslims came far under Muhammad. He gave them temples and schools, apartment houses and grocery stores, restaurants and farms. Most important of all, he gave them a new sense of dignity, a conviction that they were more than the equal of the white man whose "tricknology" is a constant threat to their well-being. The Muslims seem duly grateful for Muhammad and for his leadership.28

Summary:

The Black Muslim spokesman for the uprooted Negro, Elijah Poole, known as Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) was born in rural Georgia, the son of a Baptist minister. His formal education ended at the eighth grade, but perhaps his real education began in the Detroit Negro ghetto when one of the numerous Negro Moslem cultists, Fard Muhammad, "Allah, in Person," took him under his wing in the first Temple of Islam built in that city. After Elijah moved to Chicago, he claimed to be Fard's successor as "Elijah Muhammad and took up the cause of Black Nationalism, attacking the "white man's war" and urging blacks not to serve. Yet this powerful and influential personality seemed to be a small, mild man who spoke in a calm voice in private conversations. Together with his six able sons and an extraordinary lieutenant, Malcolm X, he succeeded in building the elaborate Black Muslim organization of "ministers and other titled subordinates and followers totaling upwards of 250,000."29

Elijah Muhammad's Chicago contained thousands of followers of the deported messiah, Marcus Garvey, who believed in the tenets of black supremacy and gladly joined the new Black Muslim movement. Garvey was the leader of one of the radical movements following World War I. He announced himself to the American public as "The Provisional President

of Africa" and toured thirty-eight states to spread his campaigns for black improvement and an exodus "back to Africa." More than a million "Garveyites" joined Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Society--most of them the poor who lived in the North's ghettos. Garvey rejected light-skinned blacks in favor of "pure Africans"--like himself. Not only did these followers find ideas and inspiration in the Klu Klux Klan and Nazi-styled causes, but they even cooperated on occasion with Southern congressional proposals for a back-to-Africa movement of blacks.

More significant was the effort of the Black Muslims to raise the self-respect and well-being of inhabitants of the black ghetto--to correct the disorganization of broken homes, the apathy, youthful defiance, unemployment, chronic poverty, illiteracy, and the frustration wrought by white discrimination. Through successful cooperative ventures Elijah Muhammad followed the self-help philosophy of Booker T. Washington (Garvey too, had once written that he was influenced by reading *Up From Slavery*). Like Booker T. Washington, he also urged cleanliness, hard work, regular habits, sobriety and virtuous family life, but Muhammad rejected Washington's theories of collaboration or accommodation with white leaders.

The reader must decide whether the above theories and practices, and those to follow in this study are expressions of variant black cultism, nationalism analogous of contem-
porary African movements, fascism of the Nazi type, or possibly a unique racial philosophy.
CHAPTER III

BLACK MUSLIM RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Identity

Whether or not the Nation of Islam represents true Islamic faith has been debated in many religious conversations. However, it is this writer's conclusions that the shield of Orthodox Islam appeared to be secondary in the outward practices of the Muslims while under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad. Although there was a religious ritual which appeared to be followed with sincerity, it is felt here that we could discard all its Islamic attributes -- its name, its prayer to Allah, its citation from the Koran, everything -- without risking in the least its appeal to the black masses who followed Elijah Muhammad.

Author George Breitman spoke of the Muslims as much more than a religious movement:

From a scientific standpoint Black Muslim history is no more or no less fantastic or strange than other religions. But the Black Muslims are a movement as well as a religious group, providing a kind of haven and hope salvation for outcasts; encouragement at self-reform and brotherhood.¹

A major goal of Elijah Muhammad and the Muslim leadership during the formative years was acceptance of the movement as


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a legitimate religion -- specifically as a legitimate sect of Orthodox Islam. However, with the growth of the movement, this goal was gradually considered unnecessary. Lincoln points out that the Muslims' self respect did not hinge on such acceptance, and that Muhammad had stated that the Muslims were legitimate and Islamic, and so far as the Muslims themselves were concerned, the matter was settled. 2

During the reign of Elijah, Orthodox Islamic groups in the United States did not acknowledge the Black Muslims as in any way related to world-wide Islam. Americans, on the other hand, according to Dr. Lincoln, have always been wary of definitions which claim to draw a precise line between the religious and the secular. Americans may reject and even combat an organization which claims to be a religion, but they are "not likely to deny that it is a religion." 3

From the earliest days of the movement, the Black Muslims have considered themselves devout adherents of the Moslem faith. They recognize Allah as the one true God (though they see him not as a unique deity but as the Supreme Black Man among Black Men, all of whom are divine). They base their services on both the Quran and the Bible, and they learned Arabic so as to be able to rely entirely


3Ibid., p. 236.
on the original Quran. They observe the classic Moslem prayer ritual and dietary laws, and they hold in high esteem the traditional pilgrimage to Mecca.

On certain fundamental points of doctrine, however, the Black Muslims have departed widely from the Orthodox Moslem tradition. Partly for this reason, and partly from an instinctive militancy toward newcomers, the official representative of Orthodox Islam in the United States had refused any recognition of the Black Muslims. The Black Muslim movement had been denounced vigorously by several Moslem groups, including the rival Muslim Brotherhood of America.

Muhammad admitted that some of the teachings and practices of his movement are at variance with those of other Moslem groups, but he presents these as differences of interpretation within a unity of belief. Black Americans, Muhammad argued, have been the victims of a harsh and cynical oppression and the Islamic faith in its pure orthodox form is not appropriate to their needs:

My brothers in the East were never subjected to the conditions of slavery and systematic brainwashing by the slavemaster for as long a period as my people here were subjected. I cannot therefore, blame them if they differ with me in certain interpretations of the message of Islam.4

Two of the Black Muslims' basic doctrines are at the heart of the controversy: their insistence that the black

man must separate himself from the abhorrent and doomed white race, and their belief that it is the manifest destiny of the Black Nation to inherit the earth. Muhammad rationallyized that a belief in panracial brotherhood would leave his followers with no more dignity and hope than they can now find in the Christian church.

In conclusion, the Muslim identity as an Islam religion is hindered because the Muslim religion differs dramatically from classical Islam and contains many heresies which would separate it from the Islamic religion. The Muslim religion advocates a doctrine of separation. The Islamic religion, on the other hand, is an evangelistic one. One of the Islamic greatest precepts is the idea of conversion, of winning non-believers; there is no shutting out of people as in the case of the Muslims who did not accept whites. Many Moslems would not qualify as Muslims because of the color of their skin.

Anti-Christian

According to Lincoln, it would be difficult, probably impossible, to separate the Black Muslim teachings on Christianity from those on race. The Muslims, under Elijah Muhammad, taught that Christianity was a white man's religion; a tool of colonialism and the stifler of the militant and manly virtues. The Muslims made constant references to the

5Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America, p. 78.
deceitfulness of the Christian missionaries in Africa. They taught a great deal of contempt for the "turn the other cheek" doctrine of Christian teachings. The Muslims were trained never to initiate a struggle, but to be prepared to defend to the death (literally) their principles and their women. Albert Memmi also says that the colonialist never seriously promoted Christian religious conversion of the colonized because the conversion of the colonized to the colonizer's religion would have been a step toward assimilation.6

Just as Lincoln believed in the similarity of Black Muslim teaching and Black supremacy, the Muslims believed in the similarity of Christianity and white supremacy. Malcolm X once expressed:

> Your Christian countries, if I am correct, are countries of Europe, North and South America . . . . The coloniza-
> tion of the dark people in the rest of the world was done by Christian powers. The number-one problem that most people face in the world today is how to get freedom from Christians. Wherever you find non-white people today they are trying to get back their freedom from people who represent themselves as Christians, and if you ask these (subjects) people their picture of a Christian they will tell you "A White Man -- a slave master."7

Muhammad taught that Christianity and the white man were the works of the devil. The "originality" of the black nation and the creation of the white race and Christianity was by Yakub, a black scientist in rebellion against Allah--this

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was the central myth of the Black Muslim Movement. It is the fundamental premise upon which rests the whole theory of black supremacy and white Christian degradation. Muhammad explained:

Who are the White race? I have repeatedly answered that question in this [column] for nearly the past three years. "Why are they white-skinned?" Answer: Allah (God) said this is due to being grafted from the Original Black Nation, as the Black Man has two germs [two people] in him. One is black and the other is brown. The brown germ is weaker than the black germ. The brown germ can be grafted into its last stage, and the last stage is white. A scientist by the name of Yakub discovered this knowledge . . . 6,645 years ago, and was successful in doing this job of grafting after 600 years of following strict and rigid birth control law.8

Although the experiment was successful, the results, according to Muslim teachings, was the populating of the world with "blue-eyed devils." These people were low in moral and physical development, thus it is understood why white athletes are poor competitors against black athletes; and why only the white man could herd millions of his fellows into the gas chambers, set off atomic bombs, and run special trains to a lynching at which the women and children are served cakes and ice cream.9

According to Muhammad's teachings, the white race was created by Yakub, a black scientist in rebellion against Allah. According to the myth, Yakub grafted out the humanity of whites while grafting out the germs of a brown people,

8"Mr. Muhammad Speaks," Pittsburgh Courier, 4 July 1959.

9Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America
thus leaving a white inhumane race. Other anti-white teachings by Muhammad may be seen in the following:

The human beast—the serpent, the dragon, the devil, and Satan—all mean one and the same; the people or race known as the White or Caucasian race, sometimes called the European race.10

Four hundred years ago, according to Muhammad's teachings, the white christians stole the Black Muslims away from their homes and brought them to North America, where the whites were already in the process of systematic genocide against the Indians. The whites enslaved the blacks and insured their bondage by robbing them of their names. By robbing them of their names, the whites both shamed them and effectively "hid" them from their own kind. Thus, the reason for the "renaming" of all new converts into the Movement.

But the Christian religion was the master stratagem for keeping the so-called Negro enslaved. The whites gave him the "poison book" and required him to join the "slave religion," which teaches him to love his oppressor and pray for them who persecute him. It even teaches him that it is God's will that he be the white man's slave! There is of course some truth in the Bible, but it is tangled in the white man's contradiction, for "from the first day (they) received the Divine Scripture they started tampering with

10"Mr. Muhammad Speaks," Pittsburgh Courier, 13 December 1958,
its truth to make it to suit themselves . . . " The "so-called" Negro-clergy also came under the critique of Muhammad.

The black clergy, in trying to ingratiate itself with the whites, will deliver their people up wholesale. Negro clergy class is the white man's right hand over the so-called Negroes.

Beliefs and Wants

Elijah Muhammad gave the following Muslim program:

1. WE BELIEVE in the One God Whose proper Name is Allah.
2. WE BELIEVE in the Holy Quran and in the Scriptures of all the Prophets of God.
3. WE BELIEVE in the truth of the Bible, but we believe that it has been tampered with and must be reinterpreted so that mankind will not be snared by the falsehoods that have been added to it.
4. WE BELIEVE in Allah's Prophets and the Scriptures they brought to the people.
5. WE BELIEVE in the resurrection of the dead - not in physical resurrection - but in mental resurrection. We believe that the so-called Negroes are most in need of mental resurrection, therefore, they will be resurrected first.

Furthermore, we believe we are the people of God's choice, as it has been written, that God would choose the rejected and the despised. We can find no other persons fitting this description in these last days more than the so-call-
ed Negroes in America. We believe in the resurrection of the righteous.

6. WE BELIEVE in the judgment, we believe this first judgment will take place as God revealed, in America.

7. WE BELIEVE this is the time in history for the separation of the so-called Negroes and the so-called white Americans. We believe the black man should be freed in name as well as in fact. By this, we mean that he should be freed from the names imposed upon him by his former slave masters. Names which identified him as being the slave master's slave. We believe that if we are free indeed, we should go in our own people's name - the black peoples of the earth.

8. WE BELIEVE in justice for all, whether in God or not; we believe as others, that we are due equal justice as human beings. We believe in equality - as a nation - of equals. We do not believe that we are equal with our slave masters in the status of "freed slaves." We recognize and respect American citizens as independent peoples and we respect their laws which govern this nation.

9. WE BELIEVE that the offer of integration is hypocritical and is made by those who are trying to deceive the black peoples into believing that their 400-year-old open enemies of freedom, justice and equality are, all of a sudden, their "friends." Furthermore, we believe that such deception is intended to prevent black people from realizing that the time in history has arrived for the separation from the whites of this nation. If the white people are truthful about their professed friendship toward the so-called Negro, they can prove it by dividing up America with their slaves. We do not believe that America will ever be able to furnish enough jobs for her own millions of unemployed, in addition to jobs for the 20,000,000 black people as well.

10. WE BELIEVE that we who declared ourselves to be righteous Muslims, should not participate in wars which take the lives of humans. We do not believe this nation should force us to take part in such wars, for we have nothing to gain from it unless America agrees to give us the necessary territory wherein we may have something to fight for.

11. WE BELIEVE our women should be respected and protected as the women of other nationalities are respected and protected.

12. WE BELIEVE that Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, 1930; the long-awaited
"Messiah" of the Christians and the "Mahdi" of the Muslims.

We believe further and lastly that Allah is God and besides HIM there is no God and He will bring about a universal government of peace wherein we all can live in peace together.

What the Muslims Want

1. We want freedom. We want a full and complete freedom.

2. We want justice. Equal justice under the law. We want justice applied equally to all, regardless of creed or class or color.

3. We want equality of opportunity. We want equal membership in society with the best in civilized society.

4. We want our people in America whose parents or grandparents were descendants from slaves, to be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own - either on this continent or elsewhere. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to provide such land and that the area must be fertile and mineral rich. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to maintain and supply our needs in this separate territory for the next 20 to 25 years - until we are able to produce and supply our own needs.

Since we cannot get along with them in peace and equality, after giving them 400 years of our sweat and blood and receiving in return some of the worst treatment human beings have ever experienced, we believe our contributions to this land and the suffering forced upon us by white America, justifies our demand for complete separate in a state or territory of our own.

5. We want freedom for all Believers of Islam now held in federal prisons. We want freedom for all black men and women now under death sentence in innumerable prisons in the North as well as the South.

We want every black man and woman to have the freedom to accept or reject being separated from the slave master's children and establish a land of their own.

We know that the above plan for the solution of the black and white conflict is the best and only answer to the problem between two people.

6. We want an immediate end to the police brutality and
mob attacks against the so-called Negro throughout the United States.

We believe that the Federal government should intercede to see that black men and women tried in white courts receive justice in accordance with the laws of the land or allow us to build a new nation for ourselves, dedicated to justice, freedom and liberty.

7. As long as we are not allowed to establish a state or territory of our own, we demand not only equal justice under the laws of the United States, but equal employment opportunities NOW!

We do not believe that after 400 years of free or nearly free labor, sweat and blood, which has helped America become rich and powerful, that so many thousands of black people should have to subsist on relief, charity or live in poor houses.

8. We want the government of the United States to exempt our people from ALL taxation as long as we are deprived of equal justice under the laws of the land.

9. We want equal education - but separate schools up to 16 for boys and 18 for girls on the condition that the girls be sent to women's colleges and universities. We want all black children educated, taught and trained by their own teachers.

Under such schooling system we believe we will make a better nation of people. The United States government should provide, free, all necessary text books and equipment, schools and college buildings. The Muslim teacher shall be left free to teach and train their people in the way of righteousness, decency and self respect.

10. We believe that intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited. We want the religion of Islam taught without hindrance or suppression.

These are some of the things that we, the Muslims, want for our people in North America.

It should be pointed out that at this time the sect has rethought its relationship with whites... Wallace D. Muhammad, present leader of the Black Muslims and son of Elijah Muhammad, announced a new open policy for white membership in
the sect. "If the white man respects us, we will respect him." "Islam does not deal in questions of color or race, we feel we can live peacefully in any community...if the whites understand our true objectives."15

Finally, Muhammad's indictment of Christianity forced thoughtful Negro preachers into an almost impossible position. Louis E. Lomax wrote of this position stating:

I have talked this [Muslim teachings] over with scores of Negro clergymen ... They agree that Muhammad has deeply shaken the Negro Christian community. Muhammad's recital of how the Christian faith has failed the Negro ... has sunk deeper into the hearts of the Negro masses than Negro clergymen will admit publicly.16 Lomax attributes the change of Negro ministers toward the true image of Jesus Christ, whether a black man or a white, to the pressures Muhammad's teachings had on Black Christian ministers.

Although Muhammad and Martin Luther King were bitter ideological enemies, Lomax felt that there was only a thin line between the two men.17 Both according to Lomax were saying that the purpose of a gospel was to speak to the "frustrations of a people."

Muhammad's gospel was not accepted by all blacks. But, more importantly, those gospels which did not deal with


17Ibid.
the questions raised by Muhammad about Christianity, were not accepted either.

**Membership**

The ritual of joining the organization itself stresses commitment without question. At the end of the general address at a temple meeting, the minister asks those non-members present who are interested in learning more about "Islam" to step to the back of the temple. There they are given three blank sheets of paper and a form letter addressed to Elijah Muhammad in Chicago:

Dear Savior Allah, Our Deliverer:
I have attended the teachings of Islam, two or three times, as taught by one of your ministers. I believe in it. I bear witness that there is no God but Thee, and that Muhammad is Thy Servant and Apostle. I desire to reclaim my Own. Please give me my original name. My slave name is as follows . . . .

The applicant is instructed to copy the above letter verbatim on each of the three sheets of paper, giving his own name without abbreviations at the bottom. If he fails to copy the letter perfectly, he must repeat the whole task. No explanation is given for any of these requirements. Formal acceptance of this letter makes the new member a Muslim, but in name only. The new member must make a personal commitment such as giving up smoking and/or drinking. This commitment comes gradually according to some of the members.

The new member usually follows three stages once he is formally accepted.

1. participation in organizational activities --
selling the Muslim newspaper, eating at a Muslim restaurant, attending and helping run Muslim meetings.

2. isolation from non-Muslim social contacts -- drifting away from former friends and associates because of divergent attitudes or simply because of the time consumed in Muslim activities.

3. assimilation of the ideology -- making full commitment, when a Muslim has so absorbed the organization's doctrines that he automatically uses them to guide his own behavior and to interpret what happens in the world around him.

The fact that the organization can provide members with a full social life further isolates them from non-Muslims. Participation is not wholly a matter of drudgery, of tramping the streets to sell newspapers and studying the ideology; the organization presents programs of entertainment for its members and public. Thus, the organization makes it possible for a member to satisfy his need for diversion without going elsewhere to do so.

Carl X's experiences were typical of the recruits growing commitment to the nation. When a friend asked, "Man, how can you believe in all that stuff?" Carl X replied:

When you start going to the temple four or five times a week and selling the newspaper you do not have time for people who are not doing these things. We drifted--the friends I had--we drifted apart .... All the friends I have now are in the nation. Another brother and I get together regularly and read the Koran and
other books, and then ask each other questions. We read and talk about the things we read and try to sharpen our thinking. I couldn't do that with my old friends.18

A good Muslim does a full day's work on an empty stomach. When he finally has his one meal of the day in the evening, it can include no pork, nor can he have a drink before it or a cigarette after; strict dietary rules are standard procedure, and liquor and smoking are forbidden under the circumstances. His recreation is likely to consist of reading the Koran or participating in a demanding round of temple-centered activities, running public meetings, or aggressively proselytizing on the streets by selling the Muslim newspaper, Muhammad Speaks. As one member stated:

We pray five times daily, do not smoke or drink alcoholic beverages. We believe in clean, modest and conservative dress for both men and women.19

Initiation of new members into the Nation of Islam is aimed at facilitating their withdrawal from society, reorienting their values, and maintaining discipline, cohesion, loyalty, and enthusiasm in the movement. The first step at withdrawal and emotional detachment from the "normal" society and the individual's belief about his past is the neophyte's negation of his "Negro-ness." He is taught to believe that his nationality is "Muslim" or "Asiatic." He is made to change his name. The member drops his last name and any mid-


dle initials. In place of these, the Messenger assigns to him a certain number of "X." For example, James Brown may become James X, James Gordon may become James 2X, and so forth. The names which individuals bore before becoming registered Muslims are said to be slave names which were given by the Caucasian "devils" or by the "slave-masters." Most Muslims retain their "slave" surname for use in such pragmatic affairs as signing checks, and so forth. On these occasions, however, the surname preceded by an X to indicate that the Muslim repudiates it; for example, "James 2X Brown."

During the indoctrination period, the Muslim is required to memorize long passages which contain "knowledge" about the movement and its history. He must also learn to recite from The Supreme Wisdom, sacred text of the movement, which was written by Elijah Muhammad. It was mainly because of the memorization from The Supreme Wisdom, in addition to his required attendance at Temple meetings, that any true Muslim is able to readily relate his reasons for becoming a Muslim and to justify his strong attachment to the "Honorable Elijah Muhammad."

In their day-to-day living, the followers of Islam are governed by a stringent code of private and social morality. Since they do not look forward to an after-life, this morality is not related to any doctrine of salvation. It is, quite simply, the style of living appropriate to a divine Black Man in his capacity as true ruler of the planet Earth. The Muslim is expected to pray five times a day -- at sunrise, noon,
mid-afternoon, sundown, and before retiring, and a sixth time if he rises during the night. All prayers are made facing east, toward the Holy City of Mecca. Before each prayer, he must make the proper ablutions: rinsing the mouth, washing the hands, feet and forearms, and so on. Cleanliness of the body, "inside and outside," is essential. Tobacco and liquor, as well as certain foods are forbidden:

Hereafter, I shall enforce restriction on my followers to eat as Allah bids us . . . . Life cannot be prolonged unless we are careful of what we eat and when we eat . . . . The foolish idea of eating three or four times a day and all between meals -- is like the poisonous swine who never has any regular eating habit.20

It is interesting to note that the Muslims fast during the month of December. Elijah Muhammad said of fasting during this period:

We fast the 12th month of the Christian year to relieve ourselves of having once worshipped that month as the month in which Jesus was born . . . . The Christians have made holidays which are used mostly for commercialization. They buy wine, whiskey and beer and fatten up pigs and hogs for the kill and roast this divinely-prohibited flesh to celebrate what the Christians call the birthday of the Son of Man. Jesus condemned such things as drunkenness and the eating of swine flesh.21

The Muslims use prayer as a means of promoting social relations between different sections of the Muslim community. In addition the belief of "leveling of social differences" is brought about through the congregational prayer ser-

20Elijah Muhammad, How to Eat to Live (Chicago: Muhammad Mosque of Islam No. 2, 1967), p. 3.

21Ibid., p. 49.
vices.

Once within the doors of the Mosque, every Muslim feels himself in an atmosphere of equality and love. . . . shoulder to shoulder, the king along with his poorest subject, the rich arrayed in gorgeous robes, the beggar clad in rags. . . . The king or rich man standing in a back row will have to lay his head . . . at the feet of a slave or a beggar in the front.22

The Muslims believe in total cleansing of the body before prayer to show respect for Allah; the preparation is as follows:

1. Washing and cleansing of all exposed parts of the body of filth and uncleanness, to stand and bow before the Lord of the Worlds.

2. The rinsing out of the mouth (the impure and evil that the mouth is guilty of speaking).

3. The washing of the hands that are subject to the handling of clean and unclean things . . .

4. The feet are washed up to the ankle if they were exposed. The feet should be washed once everyday, even though one wears shoes.

5. A total bath should be taken if there were sex relations. He is now ready for prayer. . . .23

"Islam," according to the followers of Elijah Muhammad, "is a religion that is in accord with the natural life of people." In western society according to the Muslims, there is much effort to make things beautiful on the outside while Muslim ritual does not attempt to be external.

Marriage

As a conclusion to the religious teachings and prac-

22Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Blackman (Chicago: Muhammad Mosque of Islam No. 2), 1965, p. 139.

23Ibid., pp. 147-148.
tices of the Muslims, the writer would like to examine the institution of marriage as practiced within the Nation of Islam.

From the Holy Quran, the Muslims believe that man is the maintainer of the home life. He is to provide the material needs for his household. If his wife is able to share a part of that burden with him, that is to be considered as a gift from her. She is not obligated to give to him.

Because the man is the "maintainer," nothing should be done or said in the Muslim marriage ceremony that would blind him of his natural role as the provider in the household. "When weddings are conducted in western society," the Muslims teach, "they bring gifts of money to give the new couple a start. This practice helps to blind the man of his role that is ahead of him of providing for his wife and house." According to Muslim logic, people are not going to come with more gifts to keep the rent and the car note paid, so why start this practice?

In strict Muslim lands, people do not come to weddings with a lot of gifts. It is traditional that the new couple give their guests something usually in the form of a wedding feast. The Muslims believe if they could go back to this tradition in America, it would bring back a natural change for the better in American society. The Muslims believe it is important to make marriage and home life "natural" and "real" again.

According to Muslim belief, the following Quranic
verse places the burden on married couples and the good or bad consequences that result from such unions that affect the conditions of the world:

Mankind: reverence
Your Guardian-Lord,
Who created you
From a single Person,
Created, of like nature,
His Mate and from them twain
Scattered (like seeds)
Countless men and women -
Reverence God, through Whom
Ye demand your mutual (rights)
and (reverence) the wombs
(that bore you), for God
Ever watches over you.24

The Muslims believe that if every couple from the early ages had been seriously interested in preserving the best of human life for generations to come and if they had conducted their lives in a way to safeguard the future world, we would not have the "hell" and "misery" that we have in the world today. "We would still have an "Eden" or a "garden of paradise."25 In like manner, the Muslims feel it is not mysterious or supernatural things that make life a "hell" or that destroy the "garden of Eden," heaven is in the hands of the men and women who from the union (marriage) and began increasing the population of mankind with children.26 Thus, the Muslims do not believe in birth control or abortion in

24 Holy Quran, translation by Yusef Ali, Sura IV:Verse I.
26 Ibid.
theory and doctrine. However, theory and practice in this belief is individualized in the privacy of the union. Birth control is practiced by some members of the movement.²⁷

Muslims teach also that if each member in the marriage would accept the burden of safeguarding the society by doing what is proper and best, the nation would be making a contribution toward keeping the world in order. To do the contrary, according to Muslim teachings, members would share the blame for the world being out of order. "Muhammad said that paradise lies at the feet of the mother, whenever two people come together in marriage, we expect that there will be children." Society begins growing in the womb of the mother and as little children, the new future society clings to the apron strings or around the legs of the mother. The future of society depends upon how the mother raises the little children that are at her feet."²⁸

The Muslims believe that in marriage the individual must "speak" the right words, the words that are not deceitful nor the words that are not designed to hide the truth. The Holy Quran tells the new bride and groom in particular not to "beat around the bush, but to speak straight words."²⁹

²⁷ Interview with persons wishing to remain anonymous, Chicago, July 28, 1975.


²⁹ Ibid.
Love, according to Muslim teachings, is not necessary to talk about in the marriage, because love is something that is to be expressed naturally.

Instead of love, we should talk about obligation. In marriage we are committed to each other and we are obligated to certain things for each other. We should keep the obligation in mind and not a lot of love talk.30

Finally, according to Muslim teachings, when two people come together to form a union, they come as two halves, not as two wholes. Thus, male and female are equal in marriage according to theory:

The Holy Quran teaches that the creation of the species began with a single being. That single being was made into two beings (male and female) to form the human family as we know it.31

Defection

Although very little is said or written about the defection within the nation, commitment to the nation can diminish as well as grow. One weakness within the structure of the nation, and leads to defection, is that the organization has no effective mechanism for handling grievances among the rank and file. Muslim doctrine assumes that there is a single, ultimate system of truth. Elijah Muhammad and, by delegation, his ministers are in possession of this truth. Thus, only Elijah Muhammad himself could say whether a minister was doing an adequate job. The result was that there

30Ibid. 31Ibid.
was nothing to be adjudicated between the hierarchy and its rank and file. When grievances did arise with no formal mechanism within the organization for expressing dissatisfaction, the only solution was to withdraw from the Nation.

However, it must be pointed out that the Nation of Islam does not in any real sense convert members. Rather, it attracts blacks who have already, through their own experiences in white America, developed a perspective congruent with that of the Muslim movement. The recruit comes to the door of the temple with the essence of his ideas already formed. "The Black Muslims only give this disaffection a voice."32 Thus, one could assume that defection would not be a serious concern among the hierarchy in the Nation.

Summary

Although the question of identity as a bonafide religion remains unanswered for the Black Muslim's critics; there is no doubt of the rejection of Christianity as a religion for the black man by the Black Muslims. The Nation of Islam places great emphasis upon black consciousness and racial pride, claiming that a man cannot know another man until he knows himself.

Elijah Muhammad has been explicit in his wants and beliefs for the Nation of Islam. Two main points seem to appeal to the converts for membership -- some recruits were

32 W. McCord et al., Life of Malcolm X, p. 57.
attracted primarily by black nationalism, and others by the emphasis on self help.

The Muslims follow a strong program of economic nationalism, which will be examined in the following pages.
CHAPTER IV

THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE BLACK MUSLIMS

It would be very difficult to separate the social and political actions of the Black Muslims from their economic practices. It appears that the Nation of Islam under the direction of Elijah Muhammad, did not move in the political and/or social arena unless there was an economic gain as the "hidden agenda." In like manner, economics could not be divorced from the nationalistic and religious practices of the Nation.

Elijah Muhammad's philosophy in politics and economics can be drawn from the following statement:

> When we were brought here as slaves, they didn't have 50 states, but now they have 50 states and they have offered the so-called Negro, who numbers in the millions, not the tiniest state in the Union . . . nor revenue coming from countries they have conquered . . . . We helped the Philippines . . . Japan . . . What have we gotten from this . . . . What commerce?

At which point in the history of the Nation of Islam the economic well-being became vital could not be determined in the documents. Elijah, however, has given the economic

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well-being of the Nation serious thought, and he has legi-
timized it through the annals of Black History and Black
Nationalism:

Since our being brought in chains . . . our brain
power, labor, skills, talent and wealth have been
taken . . . building and adding to the civiliza-
tion of another people. We must not let our child-
ren be, as are we, beggars of another man for his home,
facilities, clothing, food and the means of providing
a living. Man depends on land for the necessities,
food, clothing and shelter for survival . . . . There
can be no freedom without a people having their own
land.2

Muslim practices point out that, for the members,
"Charity begins at home." Every Muslim is expected to give
a fixed percentage of his income to the Movement each year.
It is said the percentage is set at one-third of all earn-
ings. In addition, the temples collect contributions for a
variety of funds such as are earmarked for real estate, pub-
lic relations, official travel, new cars, annual collection
on the anniversary of Fard's birthday, February 26th, with
no purpose designated; and one is a discretionary fund "the
No. 2 Treasury and Central Point Fund" for Muhammad to use
as he sees fit. The increase in the total funds available
to the Movement is suggested by the increase in its real es-	tate holdings--its actual amount is not known.

Holdings in the "New Mecca" Chicago

Black Muslims are quietly forging a multi-million dol-
lar real estate empire in Chicago. The Muslim realty hold-

2Ibid., p. 56.
ings in the "New Mecca," estimated by the religious sect, is estimated at 14.5 million which include a broad and impressive collection of commercial properties, apartment buildings and homes.

The investments are concentrated on the south side of the city: South Shore, Hyde Park, and Chatham neighborhoods and "Pill Hill," a section often called the "Black North Shore," which is located between 91st Street on the north, 93rd Street on the south, Stony Island Avenue on the west and Jeffery Blvd. on the east. "The holdings reflect both the economic and religious philosophy of the Nation of Islam," according to John Ali, assistant to the Hon. Wallace D. Muhammad, Supreme Minister of the sect and successor of his father, Elijah Muhammad.

Jewel of the sect's holdings is the Holy Temple of Islam and school, valued at five million dollars. The domed temple purchased from the SS Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in 1972, is topped with a rotating gold star and crescent, symbol of the sect. The Muslims disclosed that the temple's purchase was partly financed with a three million dollar loan from the Libyan Government. Among some of the properties owned in the Chicago area are:
- a new three story office and sales building valued at one million dollars.

4Ibid.
- a 1.2 million dollar printing plant, headquarters of the sect's newspaper.
- a modern $500,000 clothing store and office building.
- a bakery valued at 250 thousand dollars.
- a two million dollar cluster of five ultra-modern brick mansions which house top Muslim leaders and their families.

The apartments and homes are rented to members of the sect. Monthly rentals for one-bedroom apartments average 125 dollars, while the three-bedroom homes rent for 150 dollars a month. Most of the homes are vintage 1920 bungalows, although there are some larger, luxury residences in the posh "Pill Hill" section. Many Black Muslims own their homes. There are no accurate outside estimates of membership in the sect, but one high official said there are seventy thousand in the Chicago area.\(^5\)

Muslims generally are in the market for three and four bedroom homes in the twenty-five thousand dollar bracket and located in stable black neighborhoods. The Muslims have invested substantial sums on improvement of the buildings they have purchased. Examples are:
- in 1968 they acquired a former plant for one hundred fifty thousand dollars. It is now a printing plant which they spent $200 thousand for renovations and 750 thousand dol-

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 7.
lars for equipment.
- a savings and loan building was purchased for 300 thousand dollars, which was turned into a Muslim restaurant now valued at 500 thousand dollars.
- the sect purchased a one story building in 1961 for 100 thousand dollars, the building was razed and replaced with a two story structure housing a clothing store and offices. The new building cost 500 thousand dollars according to Muslim sources.

Generally, the properties are purchased for cash, with deals made through the Progressive Land Development Company, and the United Dynamics Corporation, the two real estate companies are headed by officers of the Guaranty Bank and Trust Company, owned by the Nation of Islam. The bank has assets of 10.2 million dollars and 5.8 million dollars in savings deposits.

The Nation's income is derived from contributions of members and from various business enterprises. Ventures of the Nation include a multi-million dollar seafood import agreement with several foreign countries which has produced more than two million dollars in retail sales according to Wallace D. Muhammad.

Poultry and produce shipped from the Nation's 15,000 acres of farmland in Alabama, Georgia and Michigan are sold through its supermarkets and retail outlets throughout the United States. A clothing factory and apparel stores and Shabazz bakery are other sources of income. Assets of the
Nation total at least 46 million dollars.

The sect has plans for constructing a nursing home and mental health complex. The Muslims also plan to continue extensive acquisition of residential property.

In order to accumulate the above holdings, Elijah Muhammad changed his philosophy in some instances towards whites. When he thought the acquisition of a plot of land for building a hospital was assured, Muhammad said:

We want to thank the Chicago white people for making it possible for us to obtain the (South Shore) Country Club. For it was impossible for us to get in such a position where we can prove ourselves worthy of freedom. They have done us a great favor. I don't think that we should have anything to do but honor and thank them for putting us in such a position . . . . We're here teaching the truth.6

Chicago politics, being what it is, prevented the Muslims from purchasing the land for the hospital. Although the Muslims are using real estate as a path to economic self-betterment, the sect frowns on investment for profit alone, so it is said.

The success of Muslim economics is done within the religious teachings of Elijah Muhammad. One worker in the Muslim-owned clothing factory, which produces women's wear, school uniforms, maternity dresses, fezzes (hats), boys' suits and girls' uniforms, stated:

I hope one day that with the help of Allah through the Divine Messenger,

A Program for Self-Development

The economic program for the Black Muslims was interwoven into a program of self-development as taught by Elijah Muhammad. The twelve-point program was as follows:

1. Separate yourselves from the slavemaster.
2. Pool your resources, education and qualifications for independence.
3. Stop forcing yourselves into places where you are not wanted.
4. Make your own neighborhood a decent place to live.
5. Rid yourself of the lust of wine and whiskey.
6. Unite to create a future for yourself.
7. Build your own homes, schools, hospitals and factories.
8. Do not seek to mix your blood through racial integration.
9. Stop buying expensive cars, fine clothes and shoes before being able to live in a fine house.
10. Spend your money among yourselves.
11. Build an economic system among yourselves.
12. Protect your women.8

There is evidence that the economic program as designed by Elijah Muhammad has worked. The purpose and scheme of the Muslims' building programs were reiterated weekly in


8Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Blackman, p. 171.
the Progress section of the Muhammad Speaks newspaper. The program provided employment, shelter, food, and clothing for the Nation. Specific businesses in Chicago include: Your Supermarket, Shabazz Groceries, Chicago Lamb Packers, Good Foods, Inc., Shabazz Bakery, Shabazz Restaurant, Salaam Restaurant, Shabazz Barber Shop, National Clothing Factory and Muhammad Speaks Newspaper Publishing Company.

These businesses supply groceries, meats, bakery products and clothing. An airplane and a fleet of trucks transport food and necessities from one end of the United States to the other. Muhammad Speaks newspaper maintains communication with the world. The range of employment offered by these businesses include managers, clerks, secretaries, bakers, cooks, butchers, waiters, seamstresses, tailors, truck drivers, pilots, mechanics, mathematicians, accountants, public relations people, technicians, plumbers, carpenters, pressmen, writers, lawyers, and many others in professions and trades. Elijah Muhammad said:

We want you to know the Islamic believers are in for building a world of their own! We are not thinking about unemployment. We can make jobs on top of jobs! I love you! I love to give you work if you can get around the other fellow and get material! We need a hospital for our sick and wounded! To those who ask, where will you get the money? Where did the white man get his money to build a world for himself? 

Very unique in the history of American Negro leadership is

9There is a Job for Everyone," Muhammad Speaks (Special Issue: September, 1965).

the organization of a program that is established on a premise of what blacks can do for themselves without support from white people -- a program that fires the latent embers of intense black nationalism with a clear-cut glorious goal as its ultimate objective. Marcus Garvey with his "Back to Africa" exhortations during the early 1920's and his nationwide phalanx of five million black followers in his Universal Negro Improvement Association, electrified the black world of America's black masses as no other movement up to his time. The same results have been evident since Elijah Muhammad introduced his beneficial Temples of Islam.\(^\text{11}\)

It is also noteworthy that the escapist Utopian character of the Garvey Movement as a response to economic deprivation is revealed in the fact that a large number of ex-Garveyites joined the Muslim Movement; which further illustrates the economic interpretation given to account for extreme Negro nationalist movements. Support for the Black Muslims came from the economically deprived lower-lower class. Its increasing importance was to be accounted for by the fact that at a time when black aspirations had risen markedly, the black unemployment rate continued to rise -- the Movement and economic program of Elijah Muhammad grew because the civil rights movement at that time had accomplished

\(^\text{11}\)Minister James Shabazz, "The Truth About Muhammad," Muhammad Speaks (Special Issue: Sept. 1965).
little in the area of economics.\textsuperscript{12}

Unquestionably, Muhammad's economic program was the most relevant and complete program among black people. While many black leaders and followers were verbalizing the slogan it's Nation Time," Muhammad was building an economic nation within a nation. To examine the plight of Black America in detail, one would see that beyond the age-old quest for "freedom" lies an equal thirst for food, clothing, shelter, jobs, and good health. To this end, Elijah Muhammad turned his economic program toward the needs and wishes of the people.

The chart on the following page outlines Elijah Muhammad's economic program for the Nation. "The chart represents many years of hard, dedicated labor on the part of our Nation's head, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Messenger of Allah."\textsuperscript{13} At the time of Elijah Muhammad's death, progress had been made in each area of the economic program. The economic blueprint for achieving economically as presented by Elijah Muhammad was as follows:

1. Recognize the necessity for unity and group operations (activities).
2. Pool your resources, physically as well as financially.


\textsuperscript{13}"Accomplishments of the Muslims," Muhammad Speaks (Special Publication, 1927).
3. Stop wanton criticisms of everything that is black-owned and black-operated.

4. Keep in mind—jealousy destroys from within.

5. Observe the operations of the white man. He is successful. He makes no excuses for his failures. He works hard in a collective manner. You do the same.\textsuperscript{14}

In summary, the economic program of the Nation of Islam does exist. One would have to see it to believe it. From meager seedlings and hard work on the part of Muhammad, Islam now flourishes in a barren of land and business holdings; and is firmly rooted in the black man of America.

Under Elijah Muhammad, the Muslims demanded an entirely separate black economy, arguing that not until the Black-American is economically independent will he be in any real sense, free. The total annual income of black communities, they pointed out, is greater than the total income of Canada.

\textsuperscript{14}Elijah Muhammad, \textit{Message to the Black Man}, p. 174.
Political Motivation

The Muslims' power to influence the general American community is significant, not only because of their increasing financial resources but also because they can be mobilized to act in unswerving unison on any matter designated by the leadership. While under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, had they voted, they could have determined the balance of political and economic power in a large city.

It was once said in Harlem that Malcolm X, then minister of the large Temple 7 and Muhammad's Chief Lieutenant, could have decided the election of Adam Clayton Powell's successor to the U. S. House of Representatives. The issue was mooted with the death of Malcolm, but the impressive political power was shown in this case.

Elijah Muhammad did not see fit to use his potential power of Black Muslims' vote as a lever to pry concessions from the white or the non-Muslim black community:

From the start, Muslims have generally preferred not to vote at all ... partly due to their self-identification with Afro-Asia, partly to their belief that America is already corrupt and doomed, and partly to their sense of futility in electing any white man to office.15

The Muslims have also refrained from voting in an effort to keep their strength a secret. "If you don't vote, nobody knows what you can accomplish when you do."

Elijah Muhammad saw blacks in America as not being

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equal nor citizen. He saw the blacks as being in an "alien country."

We are aliens and not citizens. . . . To tell a black brother that he is a citizen and has equal rights is like telling a child to go to sleep on the 24th night of December and on the next morning awaken and Santa Claus will have left a present in your stocking when that is Santa Claus talking.\(^\text{16}\)

Furthermore, Muhammad taught that the Constitution was not aimed at the Negro. Accordingly, the Negroes should not expect to have equal justice:

The slave was not mentioned there (Constitution) and it was not in the minds of the lawmakers that he should share equal justice with the master . . . . Therefore, the servant nor the slave cannot get justice--equal justice--with the master unless the master wants to give up his position as master.\(^\text{17}\)

Such positions and teaching in the Nation of Islam prevented the followers from taking part in voting or elections in the United States. The reader must realize that such conclusions are drawn from the political teachings of Muhammad, and not from documentation of voter registration or voter records. The conclusions drawn here are also consistent with Muhammad's views on political administrations and Civil Rights groups who were pushing for voter registration:

What the Civil Rights Movement is trying to do is just another effort to bring home to our people a better life. But this is the time when ours should and will get a better life on a permanent scale . . . . The political administration may change

\(^{16}\)Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Blackman, p. 310.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 309.
every four years. The Constitution gave to the people of America, and if we understand it well, it was not written with the so-called Negro in mind. It was written for white citizens of America and not the slaves.18

In addition, Muhammad once said of political endorsement, "He would have to be in sympathy with us and he would have to have some knowledge of the aims and purposes of Islam in America."19 Such a price, in this writer's opinion, would be too much to pay by a non-Muslim candidate seeking public office. However, since the Movement's leadership has been taken over by Wallace D. Muhammad, there have been indications that the Nation of Islam will begin to move into the political arena in a more active way, including voting.

Muslim politics during the leadership of Elijah Muhammad was interwoven with the Nation getting recognition and acceptance from the Black Americans. In addition, there has always been a relationship with the political philosophy and the quest for economic independence. Whenever Elijah would speak in the "political arena" economics was most always the hidden agenda:

The government can help the so-called Negro in many ways. I do not say the government should take us and set us down and make us lazy so we will not want to work for ourselves. I do not condone that sort of thing. No, help us to get a chance of doing something for ourselves. We are no more a people who can be classified as a necessary people for use only as servants, we are too many. We are 22 million people;

18Ibid. 19Ibid., p. 316.
no nation needs that many just for servants.  

Elijah Muhammad was definitely a part of the "Black Community Politics." One must realize that within the Chicago black community, a political struggle is constantly fought between the "independents" and the "organization." Another way of expressing the opposing sides is the "haves" and the "have nots"; the organization being the former and the independent blacks being the latter. It is common knowledge in the black community, and by many white politicians, that the Nation of Islam would be a powerful political force if it ever decided to become active. Thus, Elijah was able to move economically from a "political potential" standpoint. The civil rights groups mostly made up the membership of independents in the black community. The organization blacks, in many instances, were labeled "Uncle Toms." On "Uncle Toms" Muhammad said:

That doesn't mean we are in any way aggressive toward them (Uncle Toms) and seek an aggressive act. We only just criticize them for being like that. I love all my people and I believe one day they all will believe as I believe. If they don't the Prophets have lied and we just can't make liars out of them.  

Malcolm X--Islam's Political Weapon

During the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, more than any other person, Malcolm X was the political spokesman for the Nation of Islam. One observer described Malcolm X as

\[20\]Ibid., p. 311  \hspace{1cm} \[21\]Ibid., p. 320.
"the best thing that ever happened to Muhammad."\textsuperscript{22}

Malcolm was a quality organizer and speaker. Whereas Muhammad spoke mostly to the black masses, Malcolm frequently appeared at colleges and universities, and he was a popular radio and television discusant. He organized new temples, pumped spirit and encouragement into the missions, conducted rallies and fund-raising campaigns, and served as Muhammad's general trouble-shooter and spokesman.

While Malcolm was in prison he was attracted to the Black Muslims' teachings and became a Muslim. He credited his rehabilitation entirely to the "knowledge of self" as taught him by Elijah Muhammad:

All I have learned has been from the Islamic influence of Mr. Muhammad . . . . I am what you would call an ex-convict. I am not ashamed of this because it was all done when I was part of the white man's Christian world. As a Muslim, I would never have done these awful things that caused me to go to prison.\textsuperscript{23}

Following the assassination of President John Kennedy in November, 1963, Malcolm X, in a characteristic flight of rhetoric, indicted white America for creating the climate of hatred and violence in which such could occur. In a meeting in New York, Malcolm expressed that Mr. Kennedy's murder was "chickens come home to roost." "Being an old farm boy myself," he added, "chickens coming home to roost never did

\textsuperscript{22}Alex Haley, \textit{Reader's Digest}, March, 1960, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
make me sad; they've always made me glad."24

The next day Malcolm was suspended by Elijah Muhammad in order to counter in advance the negative attention the Muslims were bound to receive from the statement. Elijah felt that the Nation could not afford such negative attitudes of the public toward the Movement; the decision turned out to be a wise political decision by Muhammad. Malcolm eventually broke away from the Black Muslim Movement and was later himself assassinated.

It must be pointed out however, although Elijah Muhammad was very "low key" toward formal political action, he would enter the political arena when the Nation of Islam was brought in, or attacked in some way. One such occasion came when parts of a letter written by Arthur R. Gottschalk, State Senator of Illinois, was printed in the Chicago Tribune, June 15, 1962. Parts of the letter stated:

At a time when men of good will of all races are working hard to promote harmonious human relations and eliminate the social and economic conditions which have produced injustices, it is tragic that men like Elijah Muhammad are attempting to tear down their good work and accentuate racial tension and misunderstanding.25

Although no reply was printed in the Tribune, which this writer could locate, Elijah Muhammad did reply:

Mr. Gottschalk, we are not your slaves anymore, therefore do not misunderstand us. We care very little about you or any person or race who would think after knowing you that a promise promoting harmonious human relations,


25Chicago Tribune 15 June 1962, p. 36.
social equality with you will solve our problem. You are mistaken! We want nothing less than freedom to build our economy and society and on some of this earth that we can call our own. 

In most cases, Elijah Muhammad would use the political environment to focus attention on the economic conditions and aspirations of blacks. Without exception, the political-economic relationship was also a justification and means for Black Muslim economic gains.

In summary, the economic and political ways of the Nation of Islam can be termed, "The Original Black Capitalist." The Movement was "saddled" with a falsely fierce image. Fear of the sect was magnified when Malcolm X was murdered. The Nation's forty-four years of "build black" and "buy black" under Elijah Muhammad, had paid large dividends. "The Muslims have become the Nation's leading exponents of "black capitalism" - a Nixon (former President) term that they despise." Elijah Muhammad's energies were totally concentrated on building a Muslim-owned financial empire that someday would lead to a separate, self-sufficient "Black Islam Nation" within the continental United States. Both religious and political philosophies were directed toward this economic end. When one considers that the "self-development" program is part of the Muslim's school curriculum, education

26Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Blackman, p. 314.


28Ibid.
too, becomes a means to the economic ends of the Black Muslims. The following chapter will discuss education in the Nation of Islam.
CHAPTER V

EDUCATION IN THE NATION OF ISLAM

A powerful and long-range recruiting device of the Muslim movement under Elijah Muhammad was its parochial schools, with their massive emphasis on education about the black man. The motivating factor of the educational philosophy of Elijah Muhammad may be drawn from his writings in *The Fall of America*.

In this primary source, Elijah Muhammad spoke of the destruction of America's educational system. He points out that the destruction of the educational system will cause the destruction of civilization because man's wisdom to educate people will be lost.

...as the destruction of America's education is the destruction of their wisdom to educate the people . . . . The American people actually have come to the point where they hate their own educational system. This means that they are now hating and destroying their civilization because it is education that civilizes people.¹

Elijah Muhammad believed the destruction of the educational system was being caused by the acts of rebellion by students in the schools, both colleges and universities. He referred to the rebellious acts as "fighting their teachers"


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and "setting fire to the houses that house their textbooks."
There were many such acts during the sixties and early seventies as there were civil rights protests and anti-war protests by students in the high schools, colleges and universities. Elijah Muhammad saw such actions as rebellious and an indication that American (white) society was in the process of destroying itself. All, to make room for the "new" world.

The American people no longer want their education and they are destroying the very houses that house their textbooks of education . . . . They are fighting their teachers and then they set their houses on fire . . . . They are destroying their own civilization.  

Elijah Muhammad also accused black people of helping destroy the civilization, and not having knowledge of this destruction. Like Samson, Elijah felt that the blacks were willing to die, blind to the knowledge of the future of black people in America.

The Black people of today who are blindly helping the white people to destroy this civilization are like Samson was in his day and time; he helped to pull the building down, but he was blind to the effect of the destruction . . . .

Muhammad felt that the destruction was also caused by the continued teachings of the "old" (white) world in the universities and colleges and the students not wanting this type of guidance. However, he saw the students as destroying the old without knowledge and preparation of the "new" world.

But in their mad destruction of the old world they do not know how to prepare for the new

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
world civilization. They do not have guidance for a new civilization.4

The educational destruction as Muhammad taught, was part of the overall fall of America due to the uprising of the civilization of the Black man. The entire philosophy of Muslim teachings is formulated in the writings of Elijah's *Fall of America*. On education he also wrote:

The wisdom of the educational system of the Aboriginal Black Man of the earth has never been known to this world because the Black Man was put to sleep in order to let this world (white man) try itself at ruling. Now the rule of this world has been found to be dissatisfying and the dissatisfaction is 100 per cent.5

Elijah Muhammad attributed the destruction of the educational system to Allah (God), which again points out the religious teaching of Muslim doctrine in educational philosophy and practices:

The destruction of America's educational system is the best thing that Allah (God) could do to get rid of that which you (Blacks) depend on for guidance. America's educational system has never benefited you and me, only to keep us slaves to the white man.6

According to Elijah, the black people want an educational system that will bring unity to the Black Man before Allah: an educational system that has historical foundation in ancient and modern time; and an educational system that will guide blacks in the future. "Not an educational system that is dying today."7

Finally, Elijah issues a call to all Blacks to follow

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4Ibid., p. 93.  
5Ibid., p. 97.  
6Ibid.  
7Ibid.
him in the new education for the black man:

Remember the destruction of America's educational system means the doom of America. You are not left to wander aimlessly. The Holy Qur'an plainly teaches you and me that Allah (God) would not lead you to aimlessly . . . follow me and learn the new education for the Black man in America alone; it is for Black people all over the earth. Take it or leave it. 8

Just as the economic and political teachings and practices are interwoven in the religious beliefs of the Black Muslims, the educational aims and objectives appear to be interwoven in all these areas--economic, political and religious. The following discussion will point out this conclusion.

The Economics of Education

Although Elijah Muhammad viewed education as a benefit to the total society when he stated, "A well-educated, cultured and courteous people make a beautiful society when it is spiritual," his own educational philosophy for the Black man centered around a belief of education "by blacks," "about blacks" and for the "benefit of blacks." He not only felt education was important for the self-image but, also important for utilization purposes; utilization individually and collectively.

We must educate ourselves and our children in the richer power of knowledge which has elevated every people who have sought and used it. We must give the benefit of our knowledge to the elevation of our people. 9

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8Ibid., p. 98.

In addition, Elijah Muhammad justified the philosophy of education for improving the black people in this country by viewing the foreign students who attend school in this country:

Presently, in this country, in almost all of the major universities and colleges, there are thousands of young students from Africa and Asia. All civilized people give the benefit of their knowledge, skill and wealth to their own people. Those who do not are called traitors, defectors, spies, tools and "Toms."  

Once education has been gotten to know "self" as a black man; and willingness to use the education to benefit the collective people; Mr. Muhammad believed education should be gotten for its utilization. He believed the purpose of education was to help people get jobs and become more independent:

Get an education, but one which will instill the idea and desire to get something of your own. A country of your own and jobs of your own.

Independence for blacks from the government but within the territorial bounds of the United States was a goal of Elijah Muhammad. He felt that blacks should use education as a means for reaching this end:

The acquiring of knowledge for our children and ourselves must not be limited to the three R's---reading, writing and arithmetic. We need an education that eliminates division among us. Acquire an education that creates unity and makes us desire to be with our own.

\[10\text{ Ibid.}\]
\[11\text{ Ibid., p. 40.}\]
\[12\text{ Ibid., p. 41.}\]
Education as a means to independence was also taught when Elijah asked the following questions:

- Why should we spend twelve and sixteen years seeking an education only to give the benefit of our knowledge back to the one we sought it from? Why should we work to give the meager earnings of our labor back to our slavemaster's children? Why can't we have our own? Why can't we strive toward keeping our brain power, labor and wealth within and among and elevating our own?  

According to Black Muslim educators, the goal of education in the schools is very broad and comprehensive. Frederick 5X (Harris) explained:

> The goal of true Islamic Education is to supplement the building of temporal and scientific worldly knowledge with the building of duly proportioned social conscience and spiritual character.  

Although the above may be an educational end, of Black Muslim education, evidence concludes that the primary purpose of Muslim education as taught by Elijah Muhammad was for a utilization purpose or another economic tool.

### Educational Practices

In early 1972, the Black Muslims were operating schools in fourteen cities. Some of the schools were better equipped than others, but all had teachers who were Muslims and non-Muslim. Most of the schools were accredited by the local accrediting agency. One might note that at this
time the schools were located in urban centers having large black populations.

The University of Islam schools are legally approved as parochial schools, and the temples and school properties are tax-exempt in all states where they exist, under the same regulations that govern the church properties of all other religious bodies.\(^{16}\)

The schools have not always enjoyed this acceptance as a brief historical discussion will show.

The first University of Islam was founded in Detroit in 1932, and the second in Chicago in 1934. The other schools have been established only recently. Their establishment grew out of the distrust of conventional institutions by the Muslims. The leader of the Muslim schools was also Elijah Muhammad who believed that education of Negroes in this country was a failure because education in America was designed by the "slavemaster."

The Muslim schools, known as the University of Islam was established first in Detroit, Michigan, then in Chicago in the early thirties by Elijah Muhammad by the order of Allah in the person of Master Fard Muhammad for the purpose of teaching and educating the so-called Negroes into the knowledge of their own, the true God, the devil, true religion, the qualifications necessary to see the hereafter.\(^{17}\)

According to Beynon, within three years Fard developed, founded and secured a University of Islam dedicated to "higher mathematics," astronomy and the "ending of the spook civic-


\(^{17}\)"University of Islam," Muhammad Speaks, 15 December 1972, p. 18.
ilization. The term "University" is used for each Muslim school and does not refer exclusively to an institution of higher learning. He had also established the Muslim Girls Training Class which taught young Muslim women the principles of home economics and how to be proper wife and mother.\textsuperscript{18} This organization is still part of every Muslim temple and school.

The Detroit school dates back to the early years of the movement when the school was a constant problem for the Detroit police and school officials.

In 1934 Muhammad was found guilty of contributing to the delinquency of a minor and given six months probation when he refused to withdraw his children from the University of Islam and enroll them in the city's public schools. At about the same time when they city attempted to interfere with the operation of the school, the Muslims began a severe riot in which the Muslims tried to storm the police headquarters. Fearful of race riots, the judges of the recorder's office released with suspended sentences almost all of the rioters.\textsuperscript{19}

The trouble, however, went on for sometime as the Muslims insisted on sending their children to the University of Islam. Eventually, the Muslim leaders, working through their attorney got together with the State Department of Public Instruction representatives to work out an approved private school. The court cases were eventually dropped on the assumption the


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 903.
school had been approved.20

In 1935, a complaint against the Muslims concerning children attending the University of Islam came in Chicago. This was similar to the complaint made in Detroit in 1934. Elijah Muhammad wrote about the charges:

In Detroit, Michigan, the police department charged us with the contributing to the delinquency of minors involving one of our students . . . who had left the public schools and had come over the University of Islam. They charged us with going around to the various school grounds, begging our poor black children to leave white schools and come over to their own . . . . Now one year later here in Chicago they attack us on nearly the same charge. They wanted to school our children, they wanted them to go to public schools.21

Charges were also dropped in this case and the Muslim schools were allowed to function. For the most part, acceptance by the public and school officials of the existence of Muslim schools and their worth to the Black community, are now enjoyed by the Black Muslims.

Evidence indicates that the Muslim schools were partially established to spread the Muslim ideology, and in a way, protect young Muslim children from mockery by the Christians. Again, Elijah Muhammad wrote of this:

We know that kindergarten children and first graders once in Islam cannot be taken into Christian schools without having to suffer mockery and attack from Christian teachers who hate Islam . . . . Therefore, we believe that to keep peace with the Christians, we must teach our own children in their own schools . . . .22


21Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Black Man, p. 214.

22Ibid.
Muslim children continued to attend the public schools, however, and some attended by choice.

Although Elijah Muhammad wanted separate Muslim schools, he did not mind the Muslim schools using the same textbooks used in the public schools. To keep peace with the Christians seemed to be very important in the early days of Muslim educational philosophy. However, the philosophy of education changed as the Muslim membership and economic potential increased. This change is directly attributed to Elijah Muhammad.

Elijah Muhammad also believed and taught that racial integration of black and white children in the schools was undesirable:

You must teach and train your boys and girls in your own schools and colleges, and keep your little children especially your little girls, from mixing with white children. When you do this, then your own people who are the Original People of the human family will respect you as a nation.23

In addition, Elijah did not feel that black children were taught about "self" in the "white man's" schools; which further explained his stand against integration of schools.

Today with all of our white civilized schooling we have not been taught of our own. They will never teach us of our own.24

The Muslim educators tried to project the schools' image as one which would stand the "test" of any school or


24 Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Black Man, p. 48.
educational system. The attempt was made in many ways, one of which was the reason for referring to the schools as "University." One of the ministers of education explained:

Have you ever wondered why Messenger Muhammad refers to the schools as Universities? It is because we have a curriculum that goes beyond conventional elementary and high school programs in North America. The word university encompasses an educational institution designed to teach higher sciences, mathematics, philosophies and other subject matter to develop the mind to an elevated state.25

In like manner, much is made of the fact that Muhammad's young son, Akbar, a graduate of the University of Islam in Chicago, acted as interpreter for his father's party during a tour of Islamic countries in Africa and Asia.

The parochial schools maintained by the Muslims attracted many followers. Few, if any, children of the middle or upper-class black families attended the Muslim schools for not many of their parents were in the movement.26 Yet there was widespread sympathy for the Muslim curriculum which emphasized the history of the black man in America and the black African civilization of the pre-Colonial era.

The Muslim schools had special appeal because massive emphasis on education about the black man appealed to many lower-class blacks.

The parents who send their children to the Muslim schools are impressed with the concrete evidence of the Muslim determination to free themselves from all white influence and to prepare their youth for


26 C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America, p. 34.
roles as reclaimers of the black man's heritage. 27

The schools also had special appeal as status symbols for the lower-class blacks who could not afford to send their children to other private schools.

...the schools had important status value as private schools for low-income families who could never hope to afford the luxury of ordinary private schools. 28

Although Elijah Muhammad was surrounded by educated men such as Dr. Cross, former chairman of Atlanta University's mathematics department, he did not use them to establish school policy. Rather, he seemingly distrusted educated blacks who, according to him, "come with all their degrees in white folks' trickology wrapped around them." 29 Thus, Muhammad was the decision-maker and policy-maker and "Superintendent"; there was no board of directors or treasurer. One author commented:

Reserving all these positions for himself, this embarrassingly illiterate little man openly insults Negro Ph.D.'s while boasting in the same breath that he never finished the third grade. 30

More recently a number of Arab Nationals had been associated with the movement in teaching or in advisory capacities. Shaikh Diab, a Palestinian Arab, for example, taught Arabic at the (Chicago) University of Islam for several years.

27 Ibid., p. 131. 28 Ibid.

29 C. E. Vontress, "Black Muslim Schools," Phi Delta Kappa. (October, 1965), 90.

30 Ibid.
Also, Dr. Cedrick X (Clark) left a position as Assistant Professor of Psychology and Communication at Stanford to direct the University of Islam School, with 400 students, at San Francisco. Dr. Clark's comments were:

Everything that is taught in the public schools can be taught in Muhammad's University of Islam, with the difference being that we are a Divine institution with a spiritual dimension totally lacking anywhere else.31

There was some indication that not all educated Muslims were laudatory of Elijah Muhammad. In an interview with Vontress, Dr. Christaine X. Johnson, Principal of the Chicago school expressed displeasure at the fact that Muhammad would not listen to anyone who knows anything about education and suggested her disgust and contempt for the know-nothing favorites who bow and scrape to him.32 Dr. Johnson was replaced by Dr. Shabazz the following school year. It is not known whether or not Dr. Johnson is still in the Muslim educational system.

There is a P.T.A. in name and parents do attend monthly meetings, at which time they are admonished that unless they insist that their children study and achieve they would not be allowed the privilege of attending the Muslim school and would have to return to the schools of the "white devils." Muslim leaders would have outsiders believe there is complete parent cooperation with the schools.


32Vontress, "Black Muslim Schools," p. 91.
Although there are college-trained teachers at the University of Islam, there is doubt that they are qualified to teach every course they teach.

The math teacher is a graduate of Tuskegee Institute, where he received a B. S. in Industrial Education. In addition to teaching Industrial Arts at the school, he also teaches mathematics and physics. When asked whether he held restricted area certificates in these subjects, he said no, but added that he held a Master's Degree from Chicago Teachers College. Another teacher, a graduate of Fisk University, where she received a B. A. in Social Studies, teaches not only Negro History and African History but also French and English. She said she had taken French in high school but did not mention she studies the language in college . . . . They [students] were not able to use phrases and sentences. 33

It should also be pointed out that the Chicago school is not listed in The North-Central Accrediting Association's annual report as one of the high schools having North-Central recognition, from 1950-1975.

The Muslim leadership boasts of the school's "native" Arabic teachers. The director-principal boasted to Ventress that the children start learning Arabic in fourth grade. Although Ventress did not see Arabic classes in progress, or meet the alleged native teachers, he was shown much literature and many photographs to indicate that the language was being taught. 34

The students are transported to and from school in Muslim-owned buses. Neatness is demanded by the school of-

33 Ibid., p. 87.
34 Ibid., p. 88.
ficials. Hair and fingernails are inspected as part of the morning routine. The child who does not pass the "cleanliness" inspection does not attend school that day. There is no school on certain days for certain classes. On these days gymnastics are held for the students. All boys and girls engage in gymnastics until age sixteen.

**Curriculum**

During the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, the curriculum consisted on science, reading, mathematics, history, art and language. Language (Arabic) and math were taught to children from the age of three (allegedly). The classes at the more developed schools were taught Arabic and Elijah Muhammad even thought that Blacks needed independence from the English language.

> English is a bastard language. This is the truth. English is a bastard language, for it is a language that is made up of other languages. It is a dependent language, so we see here why it is necessary for us to have a new language.\(^{35}\)

While many of the texts used in the Muslim schools are state-adopted, much of the material is adapted or written especially for Muslim use. The first grade reader, *Muhammad's Children*, was written by Dr. Johnson. The book was first published in 1963 and was revised in 1964, because the first edition was not well printed according to the author. Although the format is well laid out, it seems somewhat remark-

able that first grade children can handle the material included. A brief passage from the text will illustrate the point:

George Washington Carver was born a slave on the Moses Carver Plantation near Diamond Grove, Missouri, during the Civil War. One dark night a band of night-riders came to the Moses Plantation, tied up his slaves and dragged them along a muddy road to Arkansas. Among the captives was [sic] a mother and her little six months old baby boy.

Spelling words from the reader included: alphabet, animals, beautiful, crescent, elephant, fiber, history, machines, prayers, scholar, temple, vegetable and yellow. The reader is organized to deal with almost every phase of Muslim life in America. It includes sections on greetings, the Muslim flag, the Messenger, the minister, the school, how to do homework, the home, the teacher, and every aspect of the Muslim nation and its business.

The traditional curriculum focused on language skills, mathematics, science and the Muslim religion, using both standard textbooks and the writings of the sect's leader, Elijah Muhammad.

It appears that the children started learning Arabic in the fourth grade. The method of instruction used was presentation of pictures and literature in the language, while the children learned a few words and phrases in the language.

At the high school level, a student might be offered French, chemistry, algebra, physics and history. There is a working relationship with the office of special programs at
the University of Chicago where students from inner-city public and private schools attend seminars in science on Saturdays. The Muslim students also participated in this program.

During the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, the schools had limited or no physical education classes at the schools. There were gymnastic classes held on certain days which all boys and girls attended until the age of sixteen. The classes did not include normal game activities which many physical education classes promote; this to the Muslim was "play" and the leadership frowned on play during school time.

Although the children did not "play," they did participate in a program of physical activities during their entire school career. When the boys reached sixteen they learned jujitsu and Karate, the girls learned homemaking arts.

The curriculum did not include art and music. If the students showed interest or talent in these areas, they were encouraged to enroll in such classes at the Y.M.C.A.

The schools operated on shifts due to the lack of space in many of the Muslim schools. However, the apparent loss of instructional time was limited because the children attended school for eleven and one-half months. Traditional Christian holidays were not observed by the schools.

The curriculum appeared to facilitate the goals set-up by the Muslim leadership. Those goals included teaching Muslim children how to be better mothers and fathers, to
know themselves, and to be able to live in any kind of so-
ciety. Elijah Muhammad pointed out these goals when he
wrote the following on Muslim education: "We must also unite
to build these educational centers and build them in a way
that will be recognized by and respected by educated people.
They must learn of the knowledge of self and kind and be
happy and at peace with each other. This is easily done if
we have time to look at self as we should. Look at self as
the brother of self. Look at self as someone today that must
do something for self or else suffer the consequences in this
society."36

The University of Islam had no formally organized
guidance program. Career speakers are invited in from time
to time. Children are taken on tours of places of interest
in the city. Occupational units are parts of the fifth and
sixth grade courses of study. College representatives from
local colleges and black colleges visit the school. Few
students attend black colleges because it is said their par-
ents do not want them to go south.

Even though parents pay tuition, the schools are fi-
nanced for the most part, by the movement. There was evi-
dence that during the early days Muhammad had difficulty
meeting the payroll. Often a collection was taken during
the Sunday meetings to help keep the schools open. The

36"Messenger Muhammad Speaks: On Education," Muhammad
teachers did complain about low salaries but Mr. Muhammad would remind them that they were being paid weekly, and that they were working for a good cause and should be willing to sacrifice a little.

One could conclude that the students who attended the Muslim schools under Elijah Muhammad, were no better or worst than students who attended other urban-center, inner-city schools, but no comparative evidence is available.

The students are no better or worse than Negro students found in most northern inner-cities. Their Beta and Gamma Otis scores are in the main below average. Even so, the students are finishing high school. In 1961, the Chicago University of Islam graduated three students; in 1962, eight students; in 1964, nine; and in 1965, thirty-one. Of the students who have graduated, twenty-three are reportedly currently enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the country.37

The July 30, 1965, issue of Muhammad Speaks, listed fifteen institutions of higher learning which Muslim students attended. Among them were: Roosevelt University, Virginia State College and Southern Illinois University. The students were in journalism, nursing, education, business, home economics, political science, engineering and agriculture. It is interesting to note that since the 1965 publication, no public announcements or follow-up of graduates were made. Instead, general announcements were made such as:

...500 believers joined the faculty and ninety-seven graduating students from the University's middle and high schools . . . . A tribute to the Hon. Elijah Muhammad was a part of the occasion and the students thanked "Him" for providing them

37Vontress, "Black Muslim Schools," p. 89.
with a quality educational system.38

This writer interviewed a student who had transferred to a public high school from the University of Islam, in order to finish his senior year. In answer to the question, "Why did you leave the University of Islam in your last year in high school?" the student said:

They could not offer me any advanced work in science and math. Anyway, the language arts was the same as I had in eighth grade, not high school English like it is here.39

The student indicated he wanted to attend Michigan State University in order to major in engineering.

The son of a Muslim leader was given recognition for having received two degrees, one in Mechanical and one in Aero-space engineering from Syracuse University. However, no mention was made of whether or not the young man had gone to the University of Islam grade and/or high schools.40

School officials would not release data on graduates or follow-up studies to outsiders for comparison purposes.

Evidence indicates that the first purpose of Muslim education as designed by Elijah Muhammad was to separate the Muslim children from (black) Christian children. Later, it appears that the purpose was broadened to be consistent with

38Muhammad Speaks, 7 March 1975, p. 5.

39Interview with a Student at South Shore High School, Chicago, October 27, 1975.

the religious teachings of racial separation. Once this latter purpose was accomplished, Elijah Muhammad legitimized the teachings within that purpose by emphasizing the knowledge of self.

First my people must be taught the knowledge of self. Then and only then will they be able to understand others and that which surrounds them. Anyone who does not have a knowledge of self is considered a victim of either amnesia or unconsciousness and is not very competent. The lack of knowledge of self is a prevailing condition among my people here in America... knowledge of self makes you take on the great virtue of learning.41

There is evidence that the Muslim schools, under Elijah Muhammad, succeeded in inculcating a hatred of whites. The high school seniors, the graduates, and college-bred men and women in the movement all spoke of teaching their people "the truth." Each student and member of the sect echoed the views of Mr. Muhammad, Dr. Cross, former chairman of Atlanta University's mathematics department, parrots the same racist philosophy ad verbum as do the Indianapolis Mosque secretary, Carl X, a dropout from ninth grade, and Ali 3X who is currently in the fourth grade at the University of Islam.42

The schools existed to perpetuate and reinforce the philosophy which Muslims preach and teach in their Mosques. It is interesting to this writer that Elijah Muhammad used the "hate" doctrine in order to emphasize the worth and knowledge

41 Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Black Man, p. 39.

42 C. E. Vontress, "Black Muslim Schools," p. 90.
of "self" (blackness). Yet, he expected others (races) to respect and give status to Black Muslims. Although this seems to be contradictory, it worked for the Muslims under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad.

The Muslim schools are located in the black slums, and by choice they are completely segregated. Facilities are Spartan in many of the schools, and some of the teachers lack college degrees. However, the lack of a college degree is not different from other parochial schools in their formative days. But through rigid discipline, a strong sense of purpose and a solid diet of "3 Rs," the Muslim schools manage to do some things that are beyond the grasp of many public schools in the urban ghettos. "They [Muslim schools] give children a first-rate education."43

The Muslims operated twenty-four schools during the leadership of Elijah Muhammad. The secretive Muslims refused to tell outsiders much about the schools. The minister of education declined to tell this writer the total enrollment of the Chicago school. Although there are no documents to compare standardized test scores on a large scale with public schools, the writer has evidence that most of those children who transfer from the Muslim school back to the public school are at or above grade level in reading.44. Also, in the black


44Reading levels of fifty transfer students at South Shore High School, Chicago, September, 1975.
community, "the word is spreading that children trained in
Muslim schools score well on standardized tests and that
Muslim schools have little trouble with drugs, truancy or
unruly behavior."45

The University of Islam No. 4 is in Washington, D. C.
This school has nearly 400 students in grades one through
twelve. Its classrooms are makeshift; the first five grades
are crowded into the basement separated by vinyl accordion
walls. There are no laboratories for the science courses.
The curriculum focuses on language skills, math, science and
the Muslim religion, using both standard textbooks and the
writings of the sect's former leader, Elijah Muhammad. But,
although the school has no formal accreditation it gets re-
sults."46

At the University of Islam, most of our children
are at or above grade level, boasts Dr. Lonnie
Shabazz, the Chief Muslim Minister in Washington.
By the ninth grade, the average pupil in Washing-
ton's predominantly black public schools is two
and a half years behind the national norm in
reading and math tests.47

Presently, Dr. Shabazz is Minister of Education at the Chica-
go school. Dr. Shabazz refused to give this writer member-
ship and standardized test data which were requested in an
interview held in October, 1975.

One of the advantages of Muslim schools seem to be
the strong cultural trademarks of the Black Muslim movement--

45"Muslim Way, " Newsweek, p. 109
46Ibid. 47Ibid.
pride, discipline, and self-sufficiency. The faithful are taught that blacks are gods and whites are devils, and despite the potential of hate this message contains, it appears to bring a sense of confidence and motivation in the classrooms. The schools in New York and Chicago are much better equipped than in other cities. The followers donate one-tenth of their income to support the schools, thus, allowing the schools to remain exempt from federal and state segregation laws.

In the Muslim schools, the strong puritanical and moral values are reflected just as in the Muslim religious movement. The girls are clad in long, flowing dresses, their heads modestly covered by scarves; the boys wear dark suits, neat white shirts and ties. The sexes are not dressing up for each other; in line with Muslim custom, the girls attend school for two and a half hours in the morning, and the boys go for an equal length of time in the afternoon.

"We won't have any sweethearting while education is supposed to be going on," vows one Black Muslim educator. That rule and all others are strictly obeyed. "We do not stand for any foolishness here," reports Maxine X, the first-grade teacher.48

The separation by sex in the school was mandated by Elijah Muhammad and is part of his overall "knowledge to benefit self."

Education for my people should be where our children are off to themselves for the first 15 or 16 years in classes separated by sex . . . . Then they could and should seek higher education without the danger

48Ibid., p. 110.
of losing respect for self or seeking to lose their identity.49

There are no extra-curricular activities and no academic "frills," no music or art. Dr. Shabazz spoke of this type of curriculum:

The critics charge that Black Muslim education turns out shallow little robots, black gradgrinds in bow ties. But at the Washington and Chicago schools the parents seem well pleased. We don't have time to spend in the classroom learning art or music. You can learn that on your own. Time is valuable and must be used for things a man must know. People can't believe that we get so much accomplished in two and a half hours, but it is concentrated multi-discipline learning.50

The Muslim school year is fifty weeks, with two weeks out during the summer months for vacation. Only Muslim holidays are celebrated. The Muslim educators feel they have founded the best educational system for blacks in America; and education for black children should not be co-educational. Minister Yusef Shsh, Dean of Boys at the Chicago School wrote:

One can readily see that the system of education proposed and instituted by Messenger Muhammad is the successful formula in effectively educating the black children . . . . Coeducation does not exist in the Muhammad Universities of Islam. Coeducation is the western way of educating youth. Separate education is the Islamic way of educating youth. Separate education destroys such social atrocities as immorality, social diseases, promiscuity and other social filth and indecencies. It is a fact that coeducation does not and will not foster a moral education.51


Mr. Muhammad saw the American black losing his identity by attending the public schools and was constantly attacking the "white schools" for the way the black children were taught. He once wrote:

Our Children should be trained in our own schools and not dropped into schools of the enemy where they are taught that whites have been and forever will be world rulers.52

Before his death in 1975, Elijah Muhammad had plans for developing a large school complex in Chicago. The present temple location and school complex is the hub of what the sect calls the University of Islam. Each weekday morning a fleet of Muslim school buses take uniformed sons and daughters of the sect to the school. Presently, more than fifteen hundred young Muslims attend classes at four elementary and secondary schools in Chicago. There are plans to build a major addition on two and one-half acres of adjoining land next to the temple. This new addition will house the technical and laboratory facilities for the school.

Although questions were asked, and documents sought, no information was secured on the selection of students for the schools. Although there are "alleged" waiting lists, this writer feels no such list exists for the Chicago school. Furthermore, transfer frequency into the public schools by students from the Muslim schools would indicate there is ample space for any child who wishes to attend the Muslim

52Supreme Wisdom.
schools, if the family was ready to make a commitment to Muslim religion, and pay the tuition.

**Prison Education**

The research on the rise and achievement of Islam and Islamic education in the prison houses of America has yet to be done. Education by Muslims in American prisons is a vital part of the movement's educational system, and it too is a powerful recruiting device.

Education by Muslims in prisons perhaps started in the early thirties when Fard Muhammad was jailed in Detroit and later, when Elijah Muhammad served time in prison. Elijah Muhammad has written about prison life and one could draw conclusions from such writings that prison education started in the early days of the movement.

He (Master Fard Muhammad) was persecuted, sent to jail in 1932. He came to Chicago in the same year, arrested almost immediately on His arrival, and placed behind prison bars . . . . Each time he was arrested he sent for me that I may see and learn the price of Truth for us (the so-called Negroes)."53 Muslims believe that Elijah Muhammad was definitely responsible for educating prisoners both in Muslim doctrine and in formal education during the time he spent in prison.

This seed (prison education) really began to grow in 1942 with the arrest in Washington, D. C., and imprisonment in Milan, Michigan of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and many of his male followers.54

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53 *Muhammad Speaks*, 1 August 1975, p. 19.

54 Ibid.
The present leader of the Nation of Islam Wallace D. Muhammad, son of Elijah Muhammad, also was in prison for fourteen months. Wallace Muhammad wrote of his father's work with prison inmates:

He would go into the prison-house with the words of Truth that have in them the power to reform, to rehabilitate the convicted and justify the innocent.55

Muhammad University of Islam was formed in the prisons formally in the summer of 1969 in the Lorton Correctional Complex, Lorton, Virginia, twenty miles south of Washington, D.C. The school had thirty-five students and three teachers under the leadership of Thomas X Howard, Jr. Dr. Lonnie Shabazz, Minister of Education, explained the school's purpose:

Its purpose was not only to teach "the roots of English, mathematics, and the sciences of life," for many of the Muslim inmates were unable to read, write and figure, but also to teach advanced English, mathematics and sciences, preparing prisoners who were dropouts to pass the high school equivalency examination and go on to higher studies in college.56

Initially the prison administration at the Lorton Correctional Complex, according to Muslim sources, tried to stop the developing University of Islam education program. However, as "they saw the remarkable almost over-night transformation of the University of Islam students, their respect and admiration for Islamic education grew."

They saw repeatedly, Muslim students, many with only six months of study in the University, take and pass the High School Equivalency Examination and in prac-

55 Ibid. 56 Ibid.
tically every instance with the highest scores.  

In addition, a pre-college program was set up, which prepared students to perform well in college level programs, sponsored at Lorton by two local colleges--Federal City and Washington Technical Institute. Thus, "the prison officials saw and recognized the power of Islam and Islamic teachings in the remaking of the fallen." Realizing the benefit of the educational program in the prison, the prison officials allowed Thomas X Howard, Director of Education and his assistant to attend the Muhammad University of Islam Faculty Class meetings on Tuesdays at the Temple No. 1 in Washington, D. C. This practice continued until the District of Columbia Department of Correction changed its prison furlough policy in the Fall of 1974.

When Thomas X Howard first heard of the education for inmates, it is said he could hardly read or write. However, rapidly he rose through the ranks to become inmate minister at the Lorton Reformatory, where he was sent to serve his prison term. Thomas X wrote of his experience:

Although I had just been given unjustly a prison sentence of 15 years to life, the teachings of Islam gave me hope and put positive values in my life.

In like manner, others spoke positively about the prison educational program sponsored by the Muslims. Minis-

57 Muhammad Speaks, 8 August 1975, p. 21.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
The University of Islam is a complete educational program, designed not merely to provide a comprehensive insight into the social sciences and the physical sciences, but also to instill confidence, motivation and self development for the black students.

The University of Islam highlights the inter-relationships of the social sciences and the physical science as they pertain to the Black man's condition and unique role in North America, the world, and the universe today. Through this supreme understanding, the Black man here at Lorton is better prepared to make the transition to true freedom, justice and equality in the community when released.  

Although there is not enough evidence to bare out the claims of Muslim followers about their prison education programs, there is an indication that some achievement has been made in this area. In a recent court case of Leroy Bennett v. Charles M. Rogers, the Superintendent of the District of Columbia Jail said he had observed amazing success by the Muslims in reforming apparently hopeless "recidivists."  

Perhaps more will be written about the effects of Muslim prison education as the research is compiled. However, this writer feels that such data must be made available to the public without limitations. Only then will the facts about the prison educational program be known.

Summary

The Muslims have used their parochial school system

60Ibid.

as a strong recruiting device throughout the years. The Muslim schools had special appeal to black inner-city residents because of the "status" implications and in many cases, because the schools offered discipline which was not found in some inner-city public schools.

The educational philosophy for the schools was established by the founder, Elijah Muhammad. Muhammad felt that the public schools were headed for destruction and they were not capable of teaching the black children about "self" and other things needed for developing the young black child. In addition, Elijah Muhammad saw education as a means of advancing the Muslims' economic program.

The educational practices, curriculum, and methods of instruction within the schools are traditional. Discipline problems and those problems of drugs and absenteeism normally found in inner-city public schools appear to be limited or non-existent in the Muslim schools.

Evaluation and follow-up studies of Muslim graduates are limited. Likewise, student achievement data was not made available to non-members, making a formal evaluation of the educational program impossible.

The following pages of this study will discuss some of the implications of Muslim education for inner-city public education.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS WITH IMPLICATIONS
FOR INNER-CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Historically, religion has been a vital force in the life of man and his society, and education has been the major instrument through which culture, beliefs, values and social systems have been perpetuated. Wherever human beings and their problems are concentrated, as they are in metropolitan inner-city areas, both religious and educational institutions assume increased importance. The Black Muslim movement in the United States fits into this pattern.

For some time it has been believed that programs of urban school improvement required substantial investments in research and development. Also, such efforts required the cooperation of urban schools, colleges and universities, state departments of public instruction and regional and national agencies. Yet, the Black Muslim movement under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad was able to provide public inner-city educators with some "food for thought" for improvement without the large resources of research and agencies.

The Muslim educational philosophy given by Muhammad must be considered in part for inner-city public schools. In fact, part of that philosophy which dealt with a "positive
black image" has been used since the 1960's in most inner-city public schools. Part of Elijah Muhammad's philosophy was to teach about "self." The emergence of Black History in the public inner-city schools fits well into the "education about self." However, this writer disagrees with Elijah Muhammad when the racial and religious prejudices are used in schools to inflate the self "black image." Unlike the child educated under a Muslim school philosophy, the public inner-city school children can develop a positive self image, and dignity without the built-in hate of other races and religions.

That phase of Muslim educational philosophy which sees education "for self" is completely unacceptable for inner-city public education. One can agree that to some extent the utilitarian aspect of schooling is desirable; one cannot, however, totally accept this philosophy as an end in itself. Inner-city children must be taught an unselfish and human approach to living in this society. "It is better to give than receive," is one lesson the children in inner-city, and "outer-city," schools must learn if they are to function in this society. One can easily see how this lesson applies to all schools.

Justification for much of Muhammad's educational philosophy can be gained from the understanding of frustrations experienced by many "culturally disadvantaged" citizens. These frustrations have been pointed out in various research projects and in writings of many scholars. Gutek points this
out in his writings:

People in the lower socio-economic classes, especially the culturally disadvantaged, have experienced long periods of frustrations in which the avenues of social mobility have been closed to them due to their lack of competence in the cultural skills and tools considered so important by the middle class. Because of racial discrimination and economic deprivation, the culturally disadvantaged often feel that the program of the middle-class school is irrelevant to their needs. . . . When its members are confronted with the seemingly alien values of the school, the results are often disinterest or rebellion against the teachers and the school on the part of the students.¹

To some degree, this explains the acceptance by inner-city residents of Elijah Muhammad's "self help" educational philosophy. In addition, it has been pointed out that rebellions by Muslim students against teachers and Muslim school instruction have been kept to a minimum.

Community involvement and/or participation in urban-center schools is a desirable goal. It is not known whether or not the concern or involvement of Muslim parents in their schools is a result of parental concern or the compulsory religious teaching of the movement; the hypothesis of this writer is that both are involved. However, such involvement whether forced or voluntary is a reality in Muslim schools, and public inner-city parents could benefit from such a program. Although Muslim educational leaders control the schools and not the parents, it appears that "parental control" vs. educators' control is not an issue in the Muslim

The lack of serious discipline problems in the Muslim schools result from a combination of traditional methods, student self-control and the authority of one spokesman for the whole nation. Those who are concerned about public school education must realize that the school cannot be the sounding board for all the "ills" of society. In like manner, the inner-city public schools cannot be continuously used as the "ladder" for individual political aspirants nor the tool for making "overnight" black community leaders. Black Muslim schools appear to have the education of their students as the only purpose for existing; public inner-city schools leave much to be desired in this area and could consider the Muslim approach.

Although one may consider the various positions regarding the question of whether education should be liberal as opposed to utilitarian, the fact remains that Elijah Muhammad's philosophy of utilitarianism has paid large dividends for the Nation of Islam. Inner-city public educators should consider the high premium the Muslims' place upon special education for wives and mothers thru their Muslim Training and General Civilization Class as an alternative to "community control." Adult education as it is now practiced in the public inner-city schools does not provide the competencies needed.

The evidence indicates that Muslim teachers are similar to those teachers employed by other private and paro-
chial school systems; they have dedication and earn lower pay than their colleagues in the public school system. This is not to say, however, that there is a lack of dedication on the part of the public inner-city school teacher.

Perhaps there is something to the practice of Muslim educators: separating students by sex for instructional purposes. Although the Muslim educator points out the advantages of such an organizational plan, sufficient data is not available to draw conclusions for inner-city public school children. In this writer's judgment, there are some advantages in this practice for reducing some types of discipline problems in the schools. It must be noted also, that the practice of separating by sexes is common for many Catholic high schools. In addition, the strict dress codes enforced by Muslim, private and parochial schools are realities which public inner-city schools should consider.

The Muslim schools are traditional in terms of curriculum and methods of instruction. The "3R's," except for the religious and language (Arabic) teachings, represent the curriculum offerings in the schools. Such a basic curriculum should be considered for the public inner-city elementary schools. The writer realizes the importance of individual differences and individualized instruction as a method needed for inner-city public schools; and in many public schools, this method is employed. This is not true of Muslim schools which employ the "recitation" and "memorization" method of instruction.
The evidence indicates that Muslim high schools offer very little in curriculum offerings which public inner-city high schools could consider. In like manner, the guidance and counseling programs in Muslim schools are inadequate or non-existent, and this points out the great strides inner-city schools have taken in trying to provide additional services for the inner-city children.

Religious training is prohibited by law in all public schools. The pros and cons of this issue are debated constantly by "friends" and "foes" of public education. The same arguments for and against religious teachings in the public schools may also be used as implications of Muslim schools for inner-city public schools.

School, program and pupil evaluation are lacking in the Muslim schools, therefore, these areas offer little for consideration by inner-city public schools.

**Summary and Conclusions**

The Black Muslim spokesman for the uprooted and frustrated urban black, Elijah Poole, known as Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975), was born in rural Georgia, the son of a Baptist minister. His formal education ended at the eighth grade, but perhaps his real education began in the Detroit black ghetto when one of the numerous black moslem cultists, Fard Muhammad, "Allah in Person" took him under his wing in the first Temple of Islam built in that city. After Elijah moved to Chicago, he claimed to be Fard's successor as "Eli-
jah Muhammad" and took up the cause of black nationalism, attacking the "white man's war" and urging blacks not to serve. Yet this powerful and influential personality seemed to be a small, mild man who habitually spoke in a calm voice in private conversation. Together with his six sons and an extraordinary lieutenant, Malcolm X, he succeeded in building the elaborate Black Muslim organization of "ministers" and other titled subordinates.

Elijah Muhammad's Chicago still contained thousands of followers of the deported Marcus Garvey, who believed in the tenets of black supremacy and gladly joined the new Black Muslim movement. Not only did these racist Garveyites find ideas and inspiration in the Klu Klux Klan and Nazi-style causes, but they also cooperated on occasion with Senator Bilbo-inspired congressional proposals for a back-to-Africa movement of blacks. The Black Muslims, like the Klan, presented themselves as a shield of female chastity, good domestic morals, and racial pride. If the white racists held that blacks were at the bottom of the evolutionary scale, the followers of Elijah Muhammad argued that the black African was at the apex of evolution and that the white man belonged to the devil. The Muslims repudiated American society, rejected Christianity as a hypocritical religion concerned only with a white God, denounced integrationists as Uncle Toms, charged that the N.A.A.C.P. was a tool of the Zionist, and encouraged anti-Semitism by picturing the Jew as an ex-
ploiter of cheap Negro labor. 2

More significant was the effort of the Black Muslims to raise the self-respect and well-being of inhabitants of the black ghetto—to correct the disorganization of broken homes, the apathy, youthful defiance and widespread ill health, unemployment, chronic poverty, illiteracy, and the frustrations wrought by white discrimination. Elijah Muhammad aroused enthusiasm by his assurance of black superiority and by the daily accounts of anti-black persecutions recorded in his organ, Muhammad Speaks. Muhammad's spoken or written messages and those of his ministers came frequently over the radio and television, and through newspaper and large public lectures.

Through successful cooperative ventures Elijah Muhammad followed the self-help philosophy of Booker T. Washington, establishing black department stores and large apartment houses, and encouraging blacks to become small capitalists. Eventually they bought farm land, grew food for their Muslim-owned grocery stores, and opened up an import business.

Black Muslims were taught to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, drugs, swearing, gambling, dancing, cosmetics, extramarital relations, and eating the pork, cornbread, and greens familiar to the southern black and to avoid hair-

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straightening, the mark of the integrationist.

The Black Muslims represented the first "home grown" American black religion under Elijah Muhammad. He taught that God and black were one, that all blacks were divine; the opposite of black was evil, therefore all white men were evil. Muhammad taught that the world's black men were divine; therefore they were unified. The weakest link in the black brotherhood according to Muhammad, was the American Negro, who was all mixed up with the white man. Muhammad wanted the American black man to be separated from white America. To accomplish this, he wanted "some states" where blacks could set up their own nation.

In the process of indicting Christianity and criticizing black leaders who sought integration, Muhammad, with the help of Malcolm X, caused thousands of black Americans to become race conscious in a way they never were before. Much of the recruiting was done in the prisons. In their work with black criminals, the Muslims won respect of black and white social workers. Whether or not the Nation of Islam represented a legitimate religion was argued by Elijah Muhammad. Acceptance as a legitimate religion of orthodox Islam was a desirable goal of Elijah Muhammad. He frequently published "What the Muslims Want" and "What the Muslims Believe" in the Nation of Islam's weekly newspaper.

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The economic and political philosophies of the Black Muslims were interwoven with the religious beliefs of the movement. The economic program of Elijah Muhammad flourished. Although a potential powerful political force existed in the Nation of Islam, this group never participated in organized politics, or voted in elections. Elijah did not see fit to use this potential power of Black Muslims' vote as a lever to pry concessions from the non-Muslim community. Muhammad felt that the constitution was not aimed at the Negro. The Muslims have been referred to as the "original black capitalists."

A powerful recruiting device of the Muslim movement was its schools. The emphasis of the schools was on black awareness, black economics and black separation. Education, like politics and economics, was interrelated in the religious teachings and practices. The schools were mostly located in the inner-city slums and were segregated. Curriculum and instructional methods were of the traditional nature. According to Muslim leaders there are claims of long waiting lists for enrollment in the schools, although there are no concrete evaluations of students' achievements made available to the public. Regular state approved textbooks are used in the Muslim schools, but the instructional materials are supplemented by Muslim-published books and teaching aids. Although all teachers do not have certificates for all of the subjects they teach, the schools are accredited by the local accrediting agencies. School facilities are better in some
cities than in others; and the Chicago complex, which houses the Mosque and University, appears to be the best facility in the Nation's school system.

Information indicates that most of the graduates of Muslim high schools attend local colleges and trade schools. There is evidence that some of the graduates attend all black colleges in the South, while some attend integrated colleges and universities away from the locale of the Muslim school they attended. Most public information about Muslim graduates show that the post-high school studies are in vocational or career education areas. However, engineering, medicine and agriculture as undergraduate majors are also chosen by some of the high school graduates.

There are strong indications that the Muslims' prison educational program is successful. Although more concrete evaluations must be made of the program, prison authorities have made positive statements about the success of the prison educational program. It must be noted that a great deal of emphasis is put on prison inmates because of the strong recruitment done in the American prisons by the Black Muslims. Many followers of Elijah Muhammad were recruited from prisons, including Malcolm X, who at one time was second only to Elijah Muhammad in the hierarchy of the Nation of Islam.

One of the purposes of this study was to examine the implications of Muslim educational philosophy, curriculum, methods of instruction, and discipline techniques for inner-city public education. It was found that the racist philos-
ophy preached by Elijah Muhammad could not be considered for public inner-city education. However, many of the teachings of Muhammad about "self" are being used in the inner-city public schools. Although this writer believes in racial pride and dignity, public inner-city education must give more consideration to a traditional curriculum with discipline in the subject matter, and in student conduct, just as the Muslim schools appear to have. It is felt that Muslims' methods of instruction are lacking in consideration for the child as an individual. The public inner-city schools seem to provide for individual differences in the instructional methods, with a sound program of guidance and counseling, an area which Muslim schools are lacking. However, public inner-city education could profit by considering a "basic" curriculum in the elementary schools similar to the "3R's" approach found in the Muslim schools.

Student discipline problems such as drugs, class cutting, and defiance of adult authority seem to be negligible in the Muslim schools. The success seems to be a result of a combination of things, all of which are a part of the Black Muslims' overall religious practices and teachings. The regimentation and discipline within the movement itself seem to flow down into the schools, thus eliminating student discipline problems found in many public inner-city schools. It also must be pointed out that the threat of being expelled from school without a "hearing" or "due process" is a deterrent to misbehavior which public inner-city schools do not
have at their disposal. Finally, parental involvement and responsibility, whether forced or volunteered, represent the difference in the public inner-city schools and the Muslim schools. There is no substitute for such responsibility when school success is at issue.