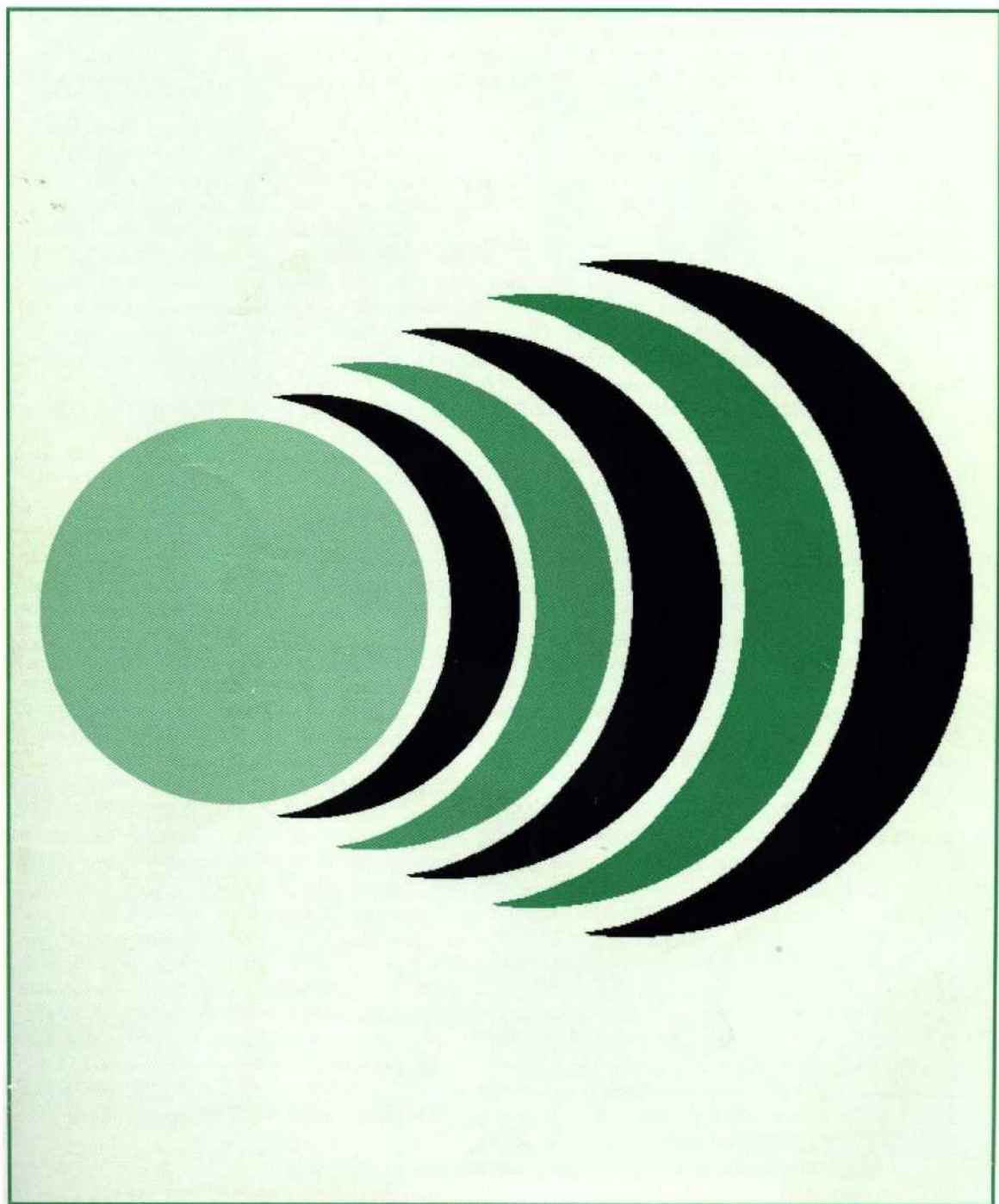


# THE **BLACK** SCHOLAR

## The Nation of Islam: 1930-1996



# Religious Heterodoxy and Nationalist Tradition: The Continuing Evolution of the Nation of Islam

by Ernest Allen, Jr.

ONE OF THE MORE PROFOUND cultural and political phenomena of the late twentieth century has been the religious conversion of approximately one million African Americans to Islam.<sup>1</sup> Encroaching upon a domain over which Christianity held virtual sway for one and a half centuries, this recent turn of events owes most of its influence to an organization known as the Nation of Islam (NOI).<sup>2</sup> The NOI — both the original group and its offshoots — offers an intriguing example of a religious-oriented nationalist movement which, over a period of six decades, has come to embrace traditional Islam in halting and contradictory ways. At times this embrace has been direct and deliberate; at other times more indirect and pragmatic, in order that central aims might be more effectively pursued. Minor organizational discontinuities aside, the NOI has proved to be the largest and longest-lived institutionalized nationalist movement among blacks in the United States, far outstripping the widespread appeal and influence of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association which flourished during World War I and the immediate post-war years.

With the passing of its supreme leader, Elijah Muhammad, in early 1975, the Nation of Islam reached a fundamental divide. Propelled by Mr. Muhammad's son, Wallace, the NOI quickly underwent fundamental changes in structure and belief, as well as in name. From a large sect preaching nominal Islam the group rapidly evolved into a Sunni

Islamic community with substantive ties to a larger international community of religious adherents. In October 1976 the NOI became the World Community of al-Islam in the West (WCIW); in its final incarnation, lasting from May 1980 through May 1985, the organization was known as the American Muslim Mission (AMM), after which time it disbanded. Today the work of Wallace Muhammad — who now goes by the name of Warith Deen Mohammed — is primarily evangelical, his constituency comprised basically of African American Muslims who regularly attend some 200 plus *masjids* throughout the United States. Within Islamic circles at home and abroad, Imam Mohammed's voice carries considerable influence; within the secular world he rarely has been heard from in recent years, save for occasional interviews in the press. Politically conservative and entrepreneurially inclined, Imam Mohammed's secular views correspond with the most reserved elements of the black middle-class, its business-oriented strata in particular. The political outlooks of his followers, however, appear to follow diverse paths.

WERE THAT THE ONLY STORY TO TELL, it would be a remarkable one, indeed. African Americans now constitute the largest single "ethnic bloc" within a religious community comprised of millions of Muslims, both immigrant and native-born, residing in the United States. However, in 1978 the picture was further complicated by the splinter-

ing off of a new formation from the ranks of the transformed NOI — then known as the WCIW. Distressed with the sweeping changes in doctrine and organizational structure as well as the loss of economic empire amassed under the old group, Minister Louis Farrakhan led thousands of dissatisfied followers into a newly constituted Nation of Islam.

Nor was Farrakhan the only defector. By far the most capable and charismatic leader to emerge during the NOI/WCIW/AMM transition period, he nonetheless has distant rivals among others dissatisfied with the course set by Warith Deen Mohammed. These include Silis Muhammad, who along with Abu Koss subsequently established the Lost-Found Nation of Islam (LFNOI), based in Atlanta; Brother Solomon (a.k.a. Royall X Jenkins) and his spokesperson, former NOI secretary Abass Rassoull, whose organization at Camp Springs, Maryland is known as the United Nation of Islam (UNOI); and John Muhammad, younger brother of Elijah, who, while maintaining a distance from Farrakhan's organization, has retained the NOI name for his Detroit temple.<sup>3</sup> The Five Percenters, an earlier but structurally amorphous spinoff formed in Harlem, New York City in 1964, continue to exert influence not only upon inner-city youth, but college students as well — especially through the medium of rap music.<sup>4</sup> None of these groups have significantly contested Farrakhan's leadership.<sup>5</sup>

Since his break, Louis Farrakhan's NOI has succeeded in expanding its membership, reclaiming a portion of the economic holdings of the pre-1975 group, and amassing new enterprises as well. Retaining core elements of the old doctrine while selectively appropriating additional elements of traditional Islam, the perennially militant NOI — like its predecessor — finds principal support among economically dispossessed African Americans, the number of which appears to increase with each passing day. Doctrinally, the LFNOI devotes considerable energies to scriptural prophecy, not least of which is the supposition that Brother Solomon of the LFNOI is identical to King Solomon of the Bible, whereas the UNOI's overriding concern lies in its reparations claims upon the U.S. government.<sup>6</sup> While the

Lost Found Nation of Islam, the United Nation of Islam, and the Detroit-based Nation of Islam also draw upon the “economically challenged,” the latter two groups, especially, take pride in preserving venerable NOI orthodoxy against any doctrinal or ritualistic changes, apostasies for which they occasionally chastise Minister Farrakhan. Initially critical of Farrakhan, the LFNOI, for its part, has sought a rapprochement with the NOI leader, with no reported success thus far.<sup>7</sup>

Without question, the principal “competition” for members on the African American Islamic front now rests between the constituencies represented by Warith Deen Mohammed and Louis Farrakhan. The primary difference between the two, however, lies in the realm of religious orthodoxy, social-class constituency, corresponding degree of militancy, and organizational centralization. The followers of both tend to associate their economic successes — and how could they not? — with the righteousness of their respective spiritual trajectories. And both groups tend towards political conservatism.

### **“Up You Mighty Race”: The Nationalist Legacy of the Universal Negro Improvement Association**

AS A RELIGIOUS-NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, what were the ideological sources of the NOI's nationalism, the constraints and compulsions by which its political and identity concerns were given shape? A fundamental duality has tended to beset African American communities from the late 18th century to this day. On the one hand, black people have, from the beginning of the republic, demanded full social and political rights based upon their presumed birth-right citizenship status. That status having been denied, they have often opted for a political and economic self-determination anchored in the renunciation, implicit or otherwise, of American civic identity.<sup>8</sup> This latter tendency has sometimes blossomed into demands for full political autonomy. Given the difficulties of securing an autonomous territorial base within the United States, however, African American political nationalism — until the mid-1960s at least — tended to flow largely through emigrationist channels.

But the material barriers to emigrationism proved at least as great as obtaining self-determination on Northamerican soil. From the outset of slavery in the early 17th century to the present, relatively few people of African descent ever permanently departed the continent for other shores. But hard realities failed to stifle the dreams of political autonomy which continued to reverberate among sectors of the African American population. Only with the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 — measures which enforced the full citizenship status of blacks in the United States for the first time since Reconstruction — were the material underpinnings of emigrationist utopianism ultimately undermined. (In the wake of “African independence” these “Back-to-Africa” sentiments were subsequently accorded a *coup de grâce* as a result of the continent’s growing social problems.) Nonetheless, despite the existence today of an unprecedented number of black elected officials in the American South, as well as a widespread election of northern blacks to office as a result of demographic changes, the state of U.S. “justice” continues to founder on the rocks of “racial” difference. Dual standards at all levels of law enforcement and the judicial system, and an absence of economic democracy which no degree of electoral participation might dissemble, continue to fuel a fundamental and enduring sense of African American alienation from the broader society. (This alienation, one might add, is shared, albeit on different grounds, by increasing numbers of marginalized Americans of all “ethno-racial” backgrounds.)

**T**HE EMIGRATIONIST-SEPARATIST stream of 20th-century African American nationalism differs significantly from its 19th and late-18th century counterparts due primarily to the influence of Marcus Garvey, who linked the quest for black self-determination to a vigorous attack upon African American claims to civil and political liberties within the United States.<sup>9</sup> (The way had been prepared, it is true, by Booker T. Washington’s subordination of such claims to economic development.) This dubious strategy lay at the core of controversies surrounding the

Garvey movement in the 1920s, resurfaced with neo-Garveyite groups and the original Nation of Islam in the 1950s, and seems to have been put to rest only recently by Minister Farrakhan’s endorsement of Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaign in 1984. Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a mass-based Pan-Africanist organization which peaked in the mid-1920s, paved the way for a complex assortment of nationalist groups which followed — including the NOI.

Although linked to one another by their respective quests for self-determination, it would be erroneous to assume any overarching ideological connection between Garveyite and Islamic-oriented nationalisms. For example, where Garveyism upheld the political and economic redemption of Africa as its ideological centerpiece, the original Nation of Islam limited its sights to the spiritual and material redemption of African Americans. (Indeed, it regarded the African continent as a land inhabited by “uncivilized” beings.)<sup>10</sup> Garvey, moreover, was an unabashed Christian who vigorously sought to subordinate religious differences among blacks to the greater goal of self-determination, while the NOI itself was founded along strict religious lines.<sup>11</sup> Although both groups counseled separatism in one form or another, emigrationism was, for Garvey, a most pressing and immediate matter, whereas the NOI approached the issue mainly as a rhetorical question devoid of practical implementation. For the UNIA as well as the NOI, the topic of African American pride and self-respect lay at the doctrinal core of each, but handled in different ways — the former championing a Pan-African identity, the latter a complex of religious and fictive ones.

**T**HERE WERE MORE direct historical connections as well, including the legacy of symbolic militarism initiated by the UNIA in the form of a disciplined, non-armed security force. “Where is the black man’s Government? . . . his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?,” inquired Marcus Garvey during the World War I era. “I could not find them, and then I declared, ‘I will help to make them’.”<sup>12</sup> Mr. Garvey’s “army” assumed the form of the

Universal African Legion, a phalanx of uniformed black men, and the Universal African Motor Corps, comprised of uniformed black women — both given to impressive public display, especially at UNIA parades and conventions. This martial touch was variously replicated by Depression-era nationalist organizations such as the St. Louis-based Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, whose male members drilled weekly with wooden rifle stocks, and less ostentatiously by the NOI's Fruit of Islam, to which all males of the group belonged.<sup>13</sup> Portentous symbol of African political independence, the red, black, and green banner of the Garvey movement would also spawn parallels among future nationalist organizations — including a slightly altered appropriation of the Moroccan state flag by the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) and a more radically modified version of the Turkish one on the part of the NOI.<sup>14</sup>

MORE SUBSTANTIALLY, a central aspect of the UNIA's legacy for future African American nationalist organizations and leaders was Garvey's political conservatism regarding domestic social issues within the United States. Studies of late 19th-century black entrepreneurialism demonstrate a close correlation between individual strivings towards capital accumulation and the existence of political conservatism within black communities.<sup>15</sup> Garvey's general penchant towards conservative values accelerated from mid-1921 onwards, after having been temporarily barred from re-entering the United States following a trip to Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>16</sup> Prior to this time, the UNIA had sought an amelioration of social conditions for black Americans *in tandem* with the goal of African liberation; subsequently, in somewhat the same way that Booker T. Washington "exchanged" the right of African Americans to enjoy full civil and political liberties for the right to pursue a dollar, Garvey contextualized the liberation of the African continent as an alternative to the African American pursuit of human rights within the U.S.<sup>17</sup> (Washington argued that such liberties eventually would flow from the fact of making oneself indispens-

able economically; Garvey reasoned that Africa, as a strong nation-state, would be able to protect the interests of diasporic blacks everywhere in the world.) In predicting that blacks eventually would be driven out of the United States into a receptive African homeland, Garveyism also bore resemblance to the "catastrophic Zionism" of Max Nordau, who in 1920 envisioned a similar flow of Jews into Palestine following their expulsion from Europe.<sup>18</sup> The untenable character of Garvey's stance was manifest in his urging blacks to be loyal to all flags under which they lived, while simultaneously declaring that "America is a white man's country." Paradoxically, this militant conservative — indeed, *reactionary* — stance *vis-à-vis* the U.S. domestic front stood in contrast to Mr. Garvey's progressive, anti-colonial position regarding African affairs as well as his support of trade unionism in the West Indies. But one thing is clear: fortuitously or otherwise, the eschewing of civil rights in the U.S. on the part of blacks themselves has always tended to coincide with the outlook and needs of far-right segments of the dominant population.

WHEN MARCUS GARVEY added to his exhortations of "race pride" a championing of "racial purity," for example, then punctuating this new emphasis with calls for an African expatriation and a renunciation of domestic rights, his position then fairly complemented the outlook of some of the most reactionary, race-baiting Negrophobes in the U.S. Indeed, the NOI's later cooperation with right-wing whites was prefigured in Garvey's infamous meeting with Edward Young Clarke, Imperial Kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan, in 1922; in his subsequent affiliations with arch-racists John Powell of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America and Earnest Sevier Cox of the White American Society; as well as the cooperation of neo-Garveyite groups such as the Peace Movement of Ethiopia with Mississippi Senator Theodore Bilbo's anti-black, African repatriation scheme in 1939. Parallels assuredly can be found in the invited appearance of American Nazi Party head George Lincoln Rockwell at the NOI Saviour's Day observance in 1962, and, sometime later, the explicit agree-

ment reached between the NOI and the Ku Klux Klan providing for the non-harassment of NOI members in the South by racist whites. In the mid-1980s Louis Farrakhan himself received public endorsements from a number of white extremist organizations, including the White American Political Association and the Posse Comitatus, which he chose (publicly, at least) to ignore. But members of the association, including its leader, Tom Metzger, reportedly accepted an invitation to attend a September 1985 rally sponsored by the NOI, to which they donated \$100. Farrakhan, moreover, has received fulsome praise from Britain's National Front, and in 1990 NOI spokesman Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad reportedly addressed a conference of Lyndon Larouche supporters.<sup>19</sup> Far from constituting an anomaly, collaboration with reactionary forces appears to be a fundamental feature of the right-wing nationalism of the oppressed — witness the ill-fated collaboration of Zionists with the Third Reich during the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Garvey's labeling of the United States as a "white man's country" in 1922 would in no ways deter his participation in electoral politics. Two years later he founded the Negro Political Union, an effort which served as a precursor to later (but infrequent) forays by African American nationalists into the electoral arena (for example, MSTA involvement in Chicago ward politics in the latter 1920s as well as the unsuccessful 1990 Maryland political campaign of Abdul Alim Muhammad).

What the Garvey movement had demonstrated, above all, was the concrete possibility of organizing a mass-based African American nationalist organization in the United States. Serving as a model — although not a particularly solid one — for a merging of the demands of African liberation with those of an economic entrepreneurialism, the UNIA inspired African Americans to seek economic and political self-sufficiency in "a land of our own." But it was in the United States that the UNIA launched its economic undertakings: short-lived economic enterprises such as the Black Star Line, a handful of grocery and millinery stores, and far more successful ventures such as the *Negro World* newspaper. Marcus Garvey's ultimate economic aim was to

establish mercantile relations between "Africans at home and abroad," with the African continent viewed as a source of precious raw materials, the Americas as a manufacturing base. An inherent difficulty which these intertwined goals of petit-bourgeois economic advancement and political militancy faced, however, was that of separating the exigencies of mass organizing from the day-to-day functioning of business enterprises. Garvey's efforts to secure shipping contracts from major North American firms and to negotiate docking arrangements with colonial governments, while simultaneously proclaiming to the world the UNIA's ultimate aim to run western colonial powers out of Africa, offers a case in point! And because the UNIA's Black Star Line was both an economic venture and a powerful symbol of black achievement, priorities were sometimes confused — such as the diverting of ships laden with perishable cargo to side destinations for propaganda purposes. The pattern of rewards and attendant pitfalls accompanying the linking of mainstream economic activities to oppositional politics would be replicated by future African American nationalist organizations — and the Nation of Islam especially.

#### **Islamic and Pseudo-Islamic Tendencies: Ahmadism, Freemasonry, and Moorish Science**

WHILE GARVEYISM CONTINUED TO SERVE as a model of political and economic self-determination for the NOI as well as other nationalist groups, examples of heterodox Islam seem to have arrived from three principal sources: the Ahmadiyyah Muslim sect, the African American Masonic offshoot known as the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North and South America (AEAEONMS), and the Moorish Science Temple of America.<sup>21</sup> Exported to the U.S. by Indian missionary Mufti Muhammad Sadiq in 1920, Ahmadiyyah Islam proved traditional in virtually every way — save for the declared prophethood of its founder, Gulam Ahmad. The Ahmadi appeal fell most heavily upon African American urban dwellers; and the imaginations of aspiring black religious leaders of all fringes

were no doubt stoked by its heterodox claims for an Islamic prophethood succeeding that of Prophet Muhammad. The NOI's uninterrupted employ of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English-language translation of the Holy Qur'an, as well as his numerous books and pamphlets devoted to Islam, suggests an important Ahmadi influence, as does Elijah Muhammad's employ of the pseudonym Gulam Bogans in the early 1940s.

THE AEAONMS, ON THE OTHER HAND, was founded by 33° Prince Hall Masons in June 1893 at the Columbia Exposition in Chicago.<sup>23</sup> For their rituals and texts, Black Shriners drew upon materials quietly expropriated from their white segregationist counterparts, whose own organization was known as the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America. This original Shrine was established as a Masonic social organization in New York City in 1871, but in its irreverent legend lay claim to having been founded by "Kalif Alee" (Caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Tabib), cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad,

in the year of the Hegira 25 (A.D. 644) at Mecca, in Arabia, as an Inquisition, or Vigilance Committee, to dispense justice and execute punishment upon criminals who escaped their just desserts through the tardiness of the courts, and also to promote religious tolerance among cultured men of all nations. . . . The order is yet one of the most highly favored among the many secret societies which abound in Oriental countries, and gathers around its shrines a select few of the best educated and cultured classes. Their ostensible object is to increase the faith and fidelity of all true believers in Allah (whose name be exalted!).<sup>24</sup>

Far from exuding spiritual solemnity, the Arabian-inspired "temples" of black and white Shriners became playgrounds in a double sense: as "burning sandboxes" of Freemasonry, where mirth and merriment reigned in contrast to the relatively staid dignity of lodge ritual; and, since the red Turkish fez had been "adopted as a uniform style of head covering for all Nobles of the Mystic Shrine,"<sup>25</sup> as sites where one could "play at" being a Turk or Egyptian — that is to say, a "Mohammedan." As Freemasons, moreover, Shriners were frequently versed in the metaphysical rigors of the Egyptian, Eleusinian, and Pagan Mysteries, as well as those of

Cabalism, Gnosticism, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, and Astrology.<sup>26</sup> Herein, believers claimed, pulsed the subterranean roots of an esoteric, hidden knowledge undergirding all religious thought, Islam included. Over time — especially given the ignorance of traditional Islamic practices in the U.S. — Islam and Freemasonry occasionally came to be identified as one.<sup>27</sup> A practicing Freemason for seven years prior to his joining the NOI, Elijah Muhammad once described the relation between Freemasonry and Islam in the following way:

Before the coming of Allah [i.e. W. D. Fard], Islam was sold to the so-called Negroes in a secret order or society called the Masons. This order is made up of thirty-three (33) degrees and it is sold by degrees. If a member is eligible and able to pay for all the degrees he may do so, but only those who take the thirty-third (33rd) are called Moslem Shriners.<sup>28</sup>

Imprinted with Garveyite, Masonic, and, most likely, Ahmadi influences as well, the Moorish Science Temple was responsible for ushering in the premier African American version of an Islamic-oriented nationalism. Reportedly founded in Newark, New Jersey in 1913 by North Carolina native Timothy Drew — better known by his Shrine-inspired name of Noble Drew Ali — the original organization seems to have been linked to an earlier formation known as the Canaanite Temple.<sup>29</sup> Details of the MSTA's early years, not to mention those of its founder, remain mired in profuse legend, but by 1925 the organization had firmly established itself on Chicago's South Side. Many of the MSTA's key ideas were absorbed by the fledgling NOI: the fictive notion of an "Asiatic" origin of African Americans; the adoption of "Moorish" dress, including fezes worn by men;<sup>30</sup> a healthy confusion of Islam with Freemasonry; the claim that Islam was the original religion of blacks prior to their having been enslaved;<sup>31</sup> and a religious nationalism nominally infused with Islamic points of reference. In the entrepreneurial realm the influence of Garveyism was equally manifest in the activities of the MSTA and the NOI: for example, a suite of "Moorish" health products, echoes of which would be seen in Minister Farrakhan's own beleaguered line of P.O.W.E.R. cosmetics, and in the desire for

land. Striving towards economic self-sufficiency at a most rudimentary level, the NOI established farms in Michigan, Alabama, and Georgia, paralleling the earlier existence of MSTA agricultural enterprises in Prince George county, Virginia; Long Island, New York; Woodstock, Connecticut; and the Berkshires of western Massachusetts.<sup>32</sup>

**I**DEOLOGICALLY, the two organizations differed in important respects as well. The UNIA legacy included the placing of women of substance — Henrietta Vinton Davis, Maymie Leona Turpeau DeMena, and Amy Jacques Garvey come readily to mind — at the top organization levels. Within the much more organizationally decentralized MSTA could be found several female heads of local branches known as “governors.” But despite the inclusion of at least one female minister, Ava Muhammad, under the leadership of Minister Farrakhan, the NOI, as in the past, observes a strict, traditional division of gender roles.<sup>33</sup> There were other divergencies. Where Noble Drew Ali preached “peace and love” to all humanity, NOI founder Wallace D. Fard taught that all whites were “devils” who eventually would be destroyed. And whereas the MSTA championed a national identity comprised of Moorish, Islamic, and Asiatic elements *and* an American civic identity (until Ali’s death from tuberculosis in mid-1929 the Chicago MSTA was deeply committed to Republican ward politics on the South Side), the overlapping group identities claimed by the NOI — Asiatic, Islamic, and Lost Tribe of Shabazz — were linked to a repudiation of American citizenship and an espousal of black political self-determination. Until the death of Drew Ali, at least, the Chicago MSTA was a very “public” organization, in contrast to the early character of the NOI, which remained far more “secretive” and inward-looking until the latter 1950s. And whereas the MSTA, up to the present day, has maintained its own, original “Holy Koran” cribbed largely from apocryphal, Christian-based scriptures, the Qur’an of the Prophet Muhammad was embraced — albeit nominally — by the NOI from the outset, its teachings gradually and selectively incorporated into the overall organizational doc-

trine. Finally, the NOI, with its claim to apocalyptic truth, assumed far more of a millenarian character than did the MSTA.<sup>34</sup>

### The Early Nation of Islam: 1930-1946

**E**STABLISHED BY ONE W. D. FARD (pronounced Fa-ROD) in Detroit in mid-1930, the Nation of Islam extolled a doctrine which was Islamic only in name. NOI beliefs regarding the anthropomorphic nature of God, the non-existence of the hereafter, and polygenesis were sufficiently distant from not only the teachings of the Qur’an and the Hadith or Sunna, but mainstream Christianity as well.<sup>35</sup> Forged in the midst of the Great Depression, Master Fard’s incipient religious views sought to address two problematic areas of African American working-class life. On the one hand lay the task of reinforcing a sense of personal dignity; on the other, promoting individual material welfare. Like Noble Drew Ali, the path by which Fard chose to approach these twinned goals lay within as well as outside the prevailing Christian worldview of African Americans. Unlike Ali, however, Fard learned to maneuver his own set of beliefs upon a sea of uncharted metaphysics.

For Prophet Fard, the elevation of black dignity and self-respect depended on the cultivation of a special African American relationship with God, as well as a selective challenging of prepotent views bearing on the origins of humanity and the beginnings of civilization. Existentially speaking, Fard’s intent was to transport African Americans from the periphery to the very center; in this respect, of course, his aims were far less cosmopolitan than the romantic nationalism of his predecessor, Marcus Garvey. But the key to Master Fard’s thought lay in the imaginative way in which he responded to specific arguments of pseudo-scientific racism, biblical cosmogony, and racialist historiography — all within the context of late 19th-century upheavals in American Protestantism.<sup>36</sup>

### The Protestant Crisis: Faith v. Science, Religion v. Everyday Life

**I**RREREPRESSIBLE DOCTRINAL (and institutional) difficulties confronted Protestant Chris-

tianity toward the end of the 19th century: while an unremitting march of scientific knowledge now found itself in open conflict with literal interpretations of the scriptures, Christianity's own strict dichotomizing of the universe into the natural and the supernatural had conspired to render the idea of God irrelevant to everyday needs. Enscathed on His heavenly throne, the Creator appeared far removed from the surrounding material culture of urban industrial society. Confronting an unceasing clash of scientific and spiritual truths, fundamentalists concurred that the Bible bespoke absolute certainty, and that religion itself constituted the highest form of science. Christian Science, with its emphasis on the spiritual healing of physical ailments, promoted similar claims, while Jehovah's Witnesses, for their part, sought millenarian solutions to the problems provoked by industrial unrest. Sensing that baptism was no longer sufficient to the conversion process, by the early 20th century members of newly formed Pentecostal and Holiness sects submitted to additional stages of ritual spiritual purification, bringing God within themselves while clinging to the unerring sanctity of the Word. Mainstream Protestants, on the other hand, had begun to shy away from literal interpretations of the Bible, often focusing instead on the life of Christ as inspiration for everyday human behavior. Frequently they adopted a more pantheistic view of the Creator, seeking to experience His presence in every aspect of daily life. Having first emerged in New England in the 1840s as a belief in the power of positive thinking to heal illness, New Thought, as it was called, later evolved into a set of variant religious doctrines which sought to establish a greater unity between God and humanity as well as the channeling of God's spirit into practical solutions to human problems. And, finally, through implementation of the Social Gospel, Protestant ministers also sought to redirect the church's attention to the material life of industrial workers and the poor. But the doctrinal breach between natural and supernatural realms could not always be healed within Christianity's perimeters; to secure that goal, for example, many white middle-class Ameri-

cans had turned to Hinduism or Buddhism, not to mention Madame H. P. Blavatsky's idiosyncratic version of eastern spirituality.<sup>37</sup>

AS HE HEWED A SPIRITUAL-MATERIAL GATEWAY for African Americans stranded in the deepest recesses of the Great Depression, Prophet Fard evolved a complex response to this still reverberating upheaval in Protestant thought. On one level he embraced the scientific viewpoint — or perhaps more accurately, its coattails — wholeheartedly. No one wishes to appear unscientific in a scientific age (as the very names “Christian Science” and “Moorish Science” attest), and Nation of Islam theology bore the imprint of these unsettling trends as well. In the name of science Fard denied the existence of spirit, be it manifested as life in the hereafter or in the more exalted form of what he called the “mystery God” of Christianity. He attacked prevailing Christian teachings which offered the prospect of a good life only after physical death — a future bliss shimmering in stark contrast to the material misery in which African Americans actually found themselves during the Depression. One's heaven and one's hell, Fard submitted, were right here on this earth.

But how was Master Fard able to reconcile his evisceration of religion's spiritual dimension with the ushering in of a new religious faith — one which, by definition, would have to be rooted in some kind of belief in the supernatural? He overcame this basic imponderable, first of all, by simply keeping such thoughts totally isolated from one another. Further obscuring this fatal, doctrinal flaw was Fard's attributing to science the mystical qualities which he had formerly ascribed to the God of Christianity, thereby allowing the supernatural to resurrect itself in neurological garb. Forced to succumb to the power of a transcendent science, spirit lay broken on the rack of enlightened contemplation; resurrected in an adjoining cell, however, it quietly entered the human realm, divinity and humanity becoming as one. This fusion of matter and spirit offered a thorough reconstituting of the African American relationship to God, where “the Blackman” vaulted beyond the status even of God's chosen few to become the Creator incarnate:

"The Holy Qur'an or Bible is made by the original people who is Allah, the Supreme Being or (Black man) of Asia." (Here one finds echoes of Moorish Science theology.) As the Blackman acquired divinity, on the other hand, that same quality was simultaneously distilled into a privileged human form. In contrast to the "spook God" of Christianity, the divine savior of black folk was said to be a living, breathing, anthropomorphic entity in the person of W. D. Fard. Now, on different occasions, it is true, Fard had referred to himself as a prophet and the Son of Man, of whom "rain, hail, snow, and earthquakes" were incontestable manifestations. The Son of Man, he declared, was the "true" and "only" God. Sharing the deific pantheon, moreover, were twenty-three scientists who also played a crucial but enigmatic role in the functioning of the cosmos. But not until after the prophet's disappearance in 1934 would an ensuing religious faction headed by Elijah Muhammad openly claim that Fard himself was Allah, the supreme God, to whom was subordinated the commonplace godliness of the rank-and-file Blackman. No more the worse for its indeterminacy than the idea of the Christian Trinity, this dualistic notion of the divine would remain a pillar of NOI belief.<sup>38</sup>

### The Origins of Humanity and Civilization

REGARDING CIVILIZATION'S ORIGINS, biblical tradition had bestowed all glory on Mesopotamia, cradled by its twin river-valleys. On the secular side, mislabeled 19th and 20th-century "world histories" also considered "western Asia" or the Near Orient — by which was usually meant Mesopotamia or Egypt — to be the veritable seedbed of universal culture. At the same time, the disemboweling of Egypt from Africa's geographical mappings, reinforced by a sublime ignorance of cultures south of the Sahel, had resulted in a banishing of the African continent to the darkest recesses of the western imagination.<sup>39</sup> Faced with the enormity of these "pro-Asiatic" and anti-African sentiments, W. D. Fard (again following Moorish Science lead) opted to promote the fictive identity of African Americans as civilized "Asi-

atic blacks," thus avoiding confusion with what he deemed to be the "uncivilized" ones of the African variety.<sup>40</sup> "Why does the devil call our people Africans?," asked Master Fard in *Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1*. "Answer: To make the people of North America believe that the people on that continent are the only people they have and are all savage." To the contrary, remarked the NOI's *Student Enrollment* catechism, "The Original Man is the Asiatic Blackman, The Maker, The Owner, the cream of the planet earth, God of the Universe."

On another front, 19th-century scientific challenges to the biblical version of Adam and Eve's creation had also led to pseudo-scientific affirmations of the existence of a pre-Adamite, Negroid "race" of inferior stamp.<sup>41</sup> Adam the White — or so the new fable went — was not the first man of creation but rather the most perfect one. Embracing this polygenetic construct in its general contours while reversing the assigned values, Fard elevated black Americans to the position of "original people" of the planet, the Lost Tribe of Shabazz. The corollary of the assertion that "all black men are Gods" and of primeval origin was that white folk, the personification of Satan on earth, were said to have been created thousands of years later through a grafting process perfected by an evil black scientist named Yakub.

Fard's version of scientific knowledge thus cast an ambivalent shadow, containing as it did the example of "science run amuck" in the foreboding machinations of Dr. Yakub, as well as what he considered to be a more salutary and disalienating process represented by the transcendence of matter over spirit. But there were other apparently useful facets as well. "The planet earth is the home of Islam and is approximately twenty-five thousand miles in circumference," he instructed. And because the black man "makes history or Qur'an to equal his home circumference," Islam thus renews "her history every twenty-five thousand years." What also passed for science within NOI circles often was transmitted in the form of mathematically oriented puzzles, the solutions to which did not ordinarily translate into anticipated, arithmetic terms:<sup>42</sup> "After learning Mathematics, which is Islam, and Islam is Mathematics, [it] stands true, you

can always prove it at no limit of time," the NOI founder once claimed. "Then you must learn to use it and secure some benefit while you are living — that is, luxury, money, good homes, friendship in all walks of life."<sup>43</sup> Although genuinely concerned with the material progress of his followers, there is no evidence that Master Fard advanced an overarching program of economic entrepreneurialism — unlike later developments within the NOI. On the other hand, his instilling of pride and self-respect among his flock (leading to their greater employability), coupled with his recommendations regarding the practice of frugal life styles and proper eating habits, did lead toward notable improvements in their material existence.<sup>44</sup>

HERE, CLEARLY, lay the ingredients of a novel religion, one tailored to the needs of newly arrived black southern migrants to the Midwest during the Great Depression. Like his *fin-de-siècle* Christian counterparts, Master Fard was led to adjust his religious thinking to the march of scientific progress while at the same time essaying to fuse the gap between natural and supernatural in the context of quotidian experience. With respect to the Great Depression era, his efforts were not radically unlike those of Father Divine, who embraced New Thought dogma, declared himself to be the incarnation of God, and also encouraged the taking of new names by followers as a sign of spiritual regeneration.<sup>45</sup> Fard's mission, on the other hand, was not exactly one of rescuing Christianity either from science or from itself. Actually, for the NOI founder to have claimed that his doctrine, with all its curiosities, somehow belonged to Christian tradition would have burdened even his most credulous proselytes. But Islam also claimed a holy book, the content of which was conveniently imperspicuous to the overwhelming majority of African Americans. Ultimately the teachings of Master Fard would be received by his followers as knowledge gleaned from Islamic scripture, notwithstanding the doctrinal incongruities between the two or the lack of any mention of the Prophet Muhammad in NOI catechisms.

Thus, it seems, it was not so much the Islam

of the Holy Qur'an as it was a peculiar *notion* of Islam which would attract NOI followers and messengers alike for years to come. Compared to the extended body of arguments elaborated by Elijah Muhammad beginning in the latter 1950s, Fard's theological legacy was both fragmented and thin — albeit enduring.<sup>46</sup> Following the latter's departure from the scene in mid-1934, after which the organization spun into decline, it was left to Muhammad to evolve a full-blown theology for the group — now variously known as the Allah Temple of Islam (ATOI) or the Holy Temple of Islam — based upon the rudimentary lessons left by his teacher.<sup>47</sup> But the ATOI's institutional reawakening would have to await Messenger Muhammad's release from prison in 1946, after nearly four years of incarceration.<sup>48</sup> Following his discharge, Muhammad made successful efforts to transform the Allah Temple from a small, inward-looking group to a major mass organization.<sup>49</sup>

#### In Transition: 1946-1958

RECENTLY ARRIVED SOUTHERN MIGRANTS comprised the NOI/Allah Temple's bedrock constituency from the Great Depression through the early 1950s. The NOI had reached a height of some 8,000 members under W. D. Fard's leadership, but by the early 1950s the ATOI's main temple in Chicago claimed fewer than 300 adherents.<sup>50</sup> However, the arrival of Malcolm X in 1952 following a six-year prison term was to transform everything. By his own account, Minister Malcolm was largely responsible for expanding the membership from approximately 400 to 40,000 persons, and the number of temples in U.S. cities from four to well over a hundred.<sup>51</sup> While it is indubitably true that Malcolm X, at this stage, was hardly capable of developing the organization on his own, it seems equally clear that without the energetic assistance of his bright, young, and articulate new minister, Mr. Muhammad would have been hard pressed to expand his group beyond the status of a store-front religious operation.<sup>52</sup> Under the latter's overarching leadership there occurred a steady growth of ATOI-affiliated economic enterprises on a scale eventually extending far beyond Garvey's

entrepreneurial legacy. By 1956 the Chicago headquarters boasted a temple, a grade school, a restaurant, bakery, grocery store, and an apartment building. Chicken and beef sold in the grocery store were raised on the ATOI's 140-acre farm at White Cloud, Michigan. Additional businesses were in place by 1958, including an auto repair and paint shop, a laundry, a cleaning plant, and dress and haberdashery establishments.<sup>53</sup>

The Allah Temple's attraction to economic entrepreneurialism lay in a desire for not only economic self-sufficiency, but also the isolation of its followers "from the wicked people and impure life as much as possible."<sup>54</sup> But a decade later organizational growth had inspired overtures to the outer world as well as a return to the original group name. Each Wednesday and Friday the public was invited to nightly forums; marking a major turning point, the Nation of Islam's first truly public convention was held in 1957.<sup>55</sup> Beginning in June 1956 and continuing through August 1959 when the paper changed ownership, articles written by Mr. Muhammad appeared in a weekly column published in the nationally distributed African American newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Thereafter, other newspapers, including *Muhammad Speaks* (founded by Malcolm X in May 1960), picked up the slack in the propagation of the NOI word.

THE NOI'S RAPID GROWTH, marked by a modest influence of traditional Islam, coincided with a now enlarged vision of the organization's domestic as well as international roles. Domestically, the NOI held claim to a more "dignified" way for Black Americans to secure justice than that proposed by existing civil rights organizations, and asserted the superiority of (nominal) Islam over Christianity as the religion of choice. On the international plane the NOI sought to become the recognized leader of *all* Muslims on the Northamerican continent. Ironically, the NOI's accelerated expansion occurred at a time when substantial civil rights gains by blacks were beginning to be effected in the American South. But the brutal backlash directed against black demonstrators and their supporters, set against the

unchanging, marginalized social status of millions of unskilled and semi-skilled black workers, North as well as South, soon led to a questioning of the process by which civil rights leaders were pursuing the goal of black equality. Exploiting these various contradictions, the Nation of Islam counterposed the goal of "separation" to the one of "integration" espoused by mainstream civil rights groups; upheld the superiority of self-defense measures over the tactics of passive resistance;<sup>56</sup> and, as a counter to the prevailing American and Christian identities of Black Americans, continued to lay claim to "Asiatic" and Islamic ones. The NOI doctrine of economic and political self-sufficiency was increasingly touted as the "alternative" to African American demands for civil rights — rights which NOI leaders unfairly but effectively characterized as "begging." As with Marcus Garvey (with parallels to Booker T. Washington before him), fundamental citizenship demands were bartered against quests for an African American political and economic autonomy which would never arrive.<sup>57</sup>

MEANWHILE, Elijah Muhammad's intense period of Qur'anic study seems to have bolstered an expansive self-confidence on another front. In early 1959 the newly established public relations department of the NOI issued biographical sketches describing him as "The Messenger of Allah" and "Spiritual leader of the Moslems in the United States."<sup>58</sup> Within the tiny, Northamerican Islamic community, the most vociferous challenge to such claims came from the Ahmadis, who possessed little clout in the larger Islamic world and who domestically, by this time, had been out-organized by the NOI.<sup>59</sup> Belying his domestic critics, in late 1959 Mr. Muhammad undertook a successful visit to Mecca and the Middle East, an indication of the degree to which pragmatic elements within the Arab world were prepared to embrace the rise of Islam, however unorthodox, in the United States.<sup>60</sup>

Doctrinally speaking, the NOI's growth in membership and economic clout during the latter Fifties was paralleled by increasing references to the Qur'an in the public writings and speeches of Elijah Muhammad. After

advertising for an Arabic instructor for the NOI's grade school known as the University of Islam, Muhammad received a response from a Palestinian Muslim by the name of Jamil Diab, who was to spend several years teaching at the institution.<sup>61</sup> Out of the close personal relationship which formed between Diab and Muhammad, the latter was exposed to the more traditional forms of Islam: conversance with the *Fatiha* (opening chapter of the Qur'an), *wudu'* (ablution), *salah* (the five daily prayers), as well as a greater respect for the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>62</sup> This new orientation was reflected in the weekly articles which Elijah Muhammad wrote for the *Pittsburgh Courier* at the time.<sup>63</sup> But the Messenger's *omra*, or small *hajj*, to Mecca would lead to a decisive change in direction, according to W. Deen Mohammed. During the 1930s Master Fard apparently had misled his followers into believing that the streets of Mecca were paved with gold, and that once qualified to visit the Holy City the believer would be offered a dazzling choice of mansions in which to reside. What Elijah Muhammad discovered in pre-OPEC Mecca, however, was little more than a "rude awakening": unpaved roads; unadorned stone edifices, none taller than three stories; and an economy built upon the bazaar trade of peregrinators. Visits to other cities of the Middle East by this quintessentially American tourist did little to disabuse him of such impressions of rudimentary economic life. Although full of praise for leaders such as Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and others, he no longer regarded the Arab material world as a fit example for black Americans, who assuredly would have to "do for self."

### **Secularization and Leftward Leanings: 1958-1964**

FROM 1958 TO 1964 THE NOI entered a more secular phase as well, dominated by concerns with worldly matters and revolutionary political discourse. To be sure, the NOI had placed emphasis on material success since the time of W. D. Fard, where heaven and hell were judged to be "right here on earth!" But the expanding scale of

operations was something else again. Although the social backgrounds of new ministers recruited by Malcolm X from the mid-1950s onward had begun to reflect a greater degree of formal education (with some even having undergone college training), the same could not be said for the rank-and-file — at least immediately.<sup>64</sup> Lacking an educated constituency, the rapid growth of the organization's economic enterprises resulted in pressures to recruit outside technical and managerial staffs. Due to ongoing tensions with immigrant Arab Muslims who often disagreed with Mr. Muhammad's heterodox Islamic doctrine, the most acceptable and readily available source of personnel, it turned out, would be found within the black middle class. In March 1958 Mr. Muhammad publicly appealed to black intellectuals to join NOI efforts to develop African American self-sufficiency. His call for a "united front" of black men four months later made clear his ambitions to become a secular as well as religious leader of Black America.<sup>65</sup> Although Muhammad's larger aims seem to have gone unrealized, eventually African Americans representing ideological views ranging from hard-shelled nationalist-oriented to Old Left were tapped for various NOI positions. Christine Johnson took charge of running the Chicago-based University of Islam and preparing its curricular materials; Dick Durham, John Woodford, and Leon Forrest at various times held the top editorial posts at the weekly newspaper *Muhammad Speaks*; former SNCC leader Diane Nash Bevel became the newspaper's librarian; and journalists Charles P. Howard, Joe Walker, Charles Simmons, and numerous others played prominent roles as correspondents.<sup>66</sup> Although such individuals were salaried employees, not converts, over time the organization did manage to attract a larger percentage of "middle-class" blacks into its actual membership.<sup>67</sup>

The physical layout of *Muhammad Speaks* itself followed the successful format established in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and other similar black publications: one article (or, as in *Muhammad Speaks*, the centerfold) set aside for the weekly scriptural teachings of Elijah Muhammad, the remaining sections devoted

primarily to secular news items and regular commentary bearing on women's interests, health, and international events. As the paper steered to the Left under its exemplary editorship, the presence of Messenger Muhammad's apocalyptic and occasionally rambling articles on the center pages, surrounded by news stories devoted to anti-colonial struggles, workers' strikes, anti-war demonstrations, and the plight of political prisoners, appeared incongruous at best. Nonetheless, the formula proved successful: far broader in scope than any black mainstream publication, *Muhammad Speaks* remained a source of hard-core news, introspective commentary, and spiritual sustenance for literally hundreds of thousands of devoted readers for over a decade.

CODIFIED IN NEWSPAPER LAYOUTS, the doctrinal division between secular and sacred was more significantly reflected in the respective public roles of Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad from the late 1950s onward. Whereas Elijah Muhammad's writings and speeches occasionally touched upon secular themes, most thoughts which he cultivated for public consumption tended to be expressed in spiritual — generally apocalyptic — terms. And where the earliest public discourses of Malcolm X revolved largely around spiritual issues, by the 1960s the subject of religion, in his public teachings at least, was mentioned mostly in passing: "You aren't oppressed because you're a Baptist or a Methodist," Malcolm chided his African American audiences, "you're oppressed because you're black." Increasingly moved by the socialist revolutions successfully undertaken in China and Cuba, as well as the ongoing anti-imperialist struggles taking place in other parts of the "non-white" developing world, Malcolm X sought to cast the African American struggle for human rights in a more encompassing, revolutionary light. Thus while Messenger Muhammad's religious precepts remained invariant, Minister Malcolm's secular call for the political transformation of the U.S. was pushed to the outer limits. Despite the private sanction given this direction by Muhammad, Malcolm's revolutionary, rhetorical flourishes

lacked institutional conviction, and it was left to the Black Panther Party to carry his "premature" call for armed struggle on U.S. soil to a disastrous end.

OFFICIALLY DEPARTING THE NOI in March 1964, Malcolm X perpetuated the NOI's spiritual/secular dichotomy by establishing autonomous, short-lived religious and secular organizations — the Muslim Mosque Incorporated (MMI) and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), respectively.<sup>68</sup> By subsequently seeking to join the civil rights movement in a meaningful way he also sought to break with the NOI's past practice of "talking tough, but never doing anything."<sup>69</sup> Malcolm's assassination in February 1965 seems to have led to a significant falling off of NOI recruitment until the latter part of the decade, when the organization made a substantial comeback. (This revitalization, it should be noted, arrived at a time when civil rights and black power organizations were in terminal decline.)

Having had insufficient time to consolidate the MMI and the OAAU following his break with the NOI, what Malcolm X left to future generations was a five-fold ideological legacy. The first involved his imparting a sense of integrity, honesty, and genuine pedagogy to African American leadership which, sad to say, has remained unparalleled since his death. Second was his vow to pursue African American liberation by "any means necessary." Third was the gift of NOI demonology, which continues to be recycled in numerous reprintings and reproductions of Malcolm's earlier speeches and taped lectures. Fourth was his conversion to Sunni Islam, a dramatic moment which scored a deep imprint upon NOI members and non-members alike. And finally, El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz bestowed upon African Americans a triple broadening of horizons regarding the concept of their struggle: from civil rights to a more fundamental demand for human rights; from the strictures of domestic politics to a genuine internationalism, bearing implications for global alliances with others facing similar oppression; and from a narrow notion of civil rights where the sanctity of private property was never deeply interrogated, to one of socialist revolution.<sup>70</sup>

## Economic Development and Bourgeoisification: 1964-1975

AT THE NOI'S THIRD ANNUAL CONVENTION in 1959 Elijah Muhammad announced a \$20 million project to construct a mosque, school, and hospital on six city blocks — an endeavor which was never realized.<sup>71</sup> But building upon earlier acquisitions, by the early 1970s the NOI had managed to accrue some \$14.5 million in Chicago property, including a string of small bakeries and cleaners, some 40-odd rental units, a controlling interest in the Guaranty Bank and Trust Co, a newspaper with annual profits of \$3 million, and a supermarket which cleared \$325,000 on sales of \$1.7 million. The group also ran a \$22 million fish import business and held title to 20,000 acres of farm land in Michigan, Alabama, and Georgia — some \$6.2 million worth.<sup>72</sup>

Although overall organizational assets were often reported to have been as high as \$70 or \$80 million, that figure was much too generous, according to Wallace Muhammad, who estimated the NOI's net worth in 1976 to be around \$46 million.<sup>73</sup> On the debit side, for example, there had existed three years earlier some \$9.4 million in long-term debt; losses accruing from the farm operations alone came to almost \$700,000 yearly; and millions of dollars in back taxes were owed the Internal Revenue Service. Other problems cited concerned sub-minimum wage salaries for employees as well as lapses in social security payments to the federal government. Due to a severe lack of cash flow, an absence of technical and managerial skills, and a downturn in the U.S. economy, at its early 1970's peak the NOI's financial empire already lay in jeopardy. In a frantic effort to obtain cash, the organization turned to Arab countries and, reportedly, to crime. A \$3 million loan — used for the purchase of a Greek Orthodox Church subsequently transformed into a mosque — was obtained from Libya in 1973, but reported efforts to secure funds from other Arab nations in exchange for the NOI's relaxing of its racial policies and the embrace of a more traditional Islam, ended in failure. Libya later refused a second loan request.<sup>74</sup>

THE NOI'S EXPANDING ECONOMIC CRISIS coincided with a further deterioration in Elijah Muhammad's health and the effective control of NOI money affairs on the part of a coterie of Chicago-based individuals known affectionately as the "royal family": FOI-head Raymond Sharrieff, Elijah's son-in-law; Hassan Sharieff, grandson; and sons Herbert Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad, Jr.<sup>75</sup> With the NOI's growing bourgeoisification endorsed by Elijah Muhammad himself, the organization in early 1972 embarked upon a \$2 million project involving the construction of five homes on South Woodlawn Avenue to be built for families of NOI officials at organizational expense.<sup>76</sup> While some NOI members felt such gifts to be well deserved, others took note of a widening economic gap between leaders and followers. In earlier years the NOI had prided itself on holding standards higher than those of the Christian church; now outsiders and some insiders as well began to question whether the difference between Muslim ministers and their stereotypical Christian counterparts was rooted in anything more than narrow doctrinal disagreements.

Responding to the corruptive "rise to power" of Mr. Muhammad's heirs apparent, a rebel group of young Muslims, described as "all in their 20s," took matters into their own hands. In October 1971 Raymond Sharrieff was the target of a botched assassination attempt; shortly thereafter, several dissidents were found murdered.<sup>77</sup> The following month, the group initiated a planned tour of NOI temples in some 16 cities, ostensibly for the purpose of forming a new organization. But the trip ended tragically in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in early 1972, where the insurgents had held a rally which culminated in the deaths of two white deputy sheriffs and an equal number of NOI adherents. From his Chicago headquarters, Elijah Muhammad denied any knowledge of the incident.<sup>78</sup> But further incidents of bloodshed — for which calculated efforts at destabilization cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor — would continue to mar the NOI's public image.<sup>79</sup> A year later, in Washington, D.C., a group of NOI disciples murdered seven members of a Hanafi Muslim sect, including

five children.<sup>80</sup> Four months later Hakim A. Jamal, cousin of the late Malcolm X and an outspoken critic of Elijah Muhammad, was executed in his Roxbury, Massachusetts home. The following September James Shabazz, minister of the Newark mosque, was assassinated by former NOI members said to belong to an insurgent group known as the New World of Islam, a tragedy which led to the subsequent murder and decapitation of four other African American Muslims in Newark.<sup>81</sup>

### The Passing of Elijah: From Nation to World Community

ELIJAH MUHAMMAD'S DEATH in February 1975 set into motion a chain of events which would change the face of Islam in the United States.<sup>82</sup> Taking firm charge of the NOI, Wallace Muhammad instituted theological and structural changes at a dizzying pace. Four months after taking command he announced a change in policy permitting whites to join the group; around the same time the first female minister was appointed. Harlem Temple No. 7 on 116th Street was renamed after Malcolm X, and a new temple opened in Spanish Harlem in an effort to increase the number of Hispanic members. Legal fees for NOI members accused of crimes were no longer to be automatically paid. The NOI's stringent dress code was relaxed, its security force, the Fruit of Islam, abolished. No longer celebrated, as in the past, as a commemorative religious holiday, Saviour's Day, 1976 was made the occasion of the first-year anniversary report; the following year the observance became known as Survival Day. By early 1978 it was reported that every top-ranking administrative post had been changed at least twice, with ministers placed on fixed salaries at \$150-\$300 per week, instead of being able to set their own rate. The ministers — now designated as *imams* — were removed from business operations, and unprofitable enterprises scrapped.<sup>83</sup> In line with these structural transformations, a most fundamental change occurred within NOI doctrine as well. No longer would the racialized elements of NOI eschatology issue from its gatherings and

propaganda organs: the organization's beliefs were becoming fully consonant with those of Sunni Islam. Prophet Muhammad was declared to be seal of the prophets, the Holy Qur'an the last book. Henceforth the group would observe the Five Pillars of Islam, the *yaum al-jumu'a* (Friday congregational prayers), as well as the practice of traditional *salats* or prayers, for which seats were ripped out of the former temples in order to provide appropriate space.<sup>84</sup>

THE FINANCIAL TURMOIL resulting from Elijah Muhammad's having died intestate pitted the claims of some family members against those of the organization. For years, cash had been taken in with no accountability; in many instances Elijah Muhammad's personal holdings proved inseparable from those of the NOI. As a result, some of the properties, including Your Supermarket, The Fish House, Salaam Restaurant, and the Shabazz Bakery, were divided among the family; others went to the organization.<sup>85</sup> In the process the state did its best to withhold as many resources as possible from the NOI.<sup>86</sup> In mid-1986 a Chicago probate court ruled that a \$5.7 million Poor Fund Account belonged not to the former Nation of Islam, but to Mr. Muhammad's personal estate. Awarding the amount to his twenty-two documented children,<sup>87</sup> the court ordered the repository for the account, Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank (formerly First Pacific Bank) of Chicago, to relinquish the funds.<sup>88</sup>

Inheriting an economic morass which was years in the making, Wallace Muhammad announced to his followers in 1976 that "You are in debt, debt, debt."<sup>89</sup> With the selling off or leasing of NOI properties, millions of dollars of inherited financial obligations were eventually retired. Stepping down as leader of the WCIW in 1978, Muhammad noted that the organization's "image has been changed from one of financial empire to one of a real religious movement and I hope it remains that way."<sup>90</sup> But the claim was not quite accurate: although the WCIW had dropped the rhetoric of economic nationalism and involuntarily liquidated many of its properties, the quest for economic empire seems to have burned just as strongly as

ever.<sup>91</sup> Early the following year, American Pouch Foods, Inc. (APF), a joint economic venture begun by the WCIW and members of Chicago's Chinese business community, signed an 18-month initial contract with the Defense Department to produce "MRE" (meal-ready-to-eat) plastic and foil pouches, replacing the "C-rations" formerly used by U.S. combat troops. After missing two delivery dates, its \$21.3 million contract (the largest ever awarded a minority-controlled firm) was canceled, and APF folded. Despite this setback, by 1986 enterprises under Warith Deen Mohammed's command claimed properties worth \$12 million.<sup>92</sup>

IN ORDER TO CUSHION THE RAPID PACE of ideological and structural changes occurring within the organization, a series of transitional stages was undertaken by leadership. Beginning in early 1976, as a sop to repressed nationalist undercurrents within the organization, members were referred to as Bilalians, after the devout Abyssinian Muslim, Bilal ibn Rabah, whom the Prophet Muhammad appointed as the first *muezzin*. Thereafter, *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper became *Bilalian News*.<sup>93</sup> Later that year the NOI name was changed to the World Community of al-Islam in the West, a move which emphasized the internationalist ties of Muslims over the nationalistic bonds of African Americans, or *ummah* over *'asabiya*.<sup>94</sup> In the spring of 1980 the group renamed itself the American Muslim Mission, an identification retained until its dissolution five years later. At that point formerly affiliated mosques were urged to "associate and collaborate with other Islamic groups of all races and ethnic origins."<sup>95</sup>

WITH CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION came a new-found focus on American patriotism: "The problem is," affirmed Wallace Muhammad in 1978, "we don't identify with America. . . . We haven't been raised to believe that citizens have a voice and power." It was, of course, the centuries-old suppression of the "voice and power" of African Americans which, for many of them, had soured any sense of devotion to the state. But on July 4, 1979, with optimism ringing in the air, thousands of Bilalians marched down

Chicago's Michigan Avenue bearing American flags and posters affirming their patriotism: "America Is Hope," "Races Unite!," "Build One Nation!"<sup>96</sup> "How can we better serve this country?," Imam Mohammed was asked in a later interview. "We cannot make much of a contribution to the country as citizens," he replied, "if we ourselves don't have those healthy sensitivities that the citizens have for the future of the country in politics and even in business."<sup>97</sup> Mohammed's "sensitivities" were later reflected in his support for conservative Republican political candidates throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, including his backing of George Bush over Bill Clinton in the last presidential election.<sup>98</sup> His highly publicized leading of the U.S. Congress in prayer has been depicted by some as a decisive, symbolic victory for Islam in the United States, by others as a shameful sellout to the Great Satan! Despite undeniable changes in secular as well as religious orientation, Mohammed remains wedded to earlier NOI precepts of self-sufficiency, economic entrepreneurialism, and political conservatism. Today he has become the most prominent spokesperson for Islam in the United States, but his direct constituency is much smaller. "I represent my supporters who are mostly African American Muslims of one history and one aim — excellence,"<sup>99</sup> Imam Mohammed recently affirmed. Precise figures are still hard to come by, but in 1986, by his own account, that represented some 25,000 to 30,000 active supporters.<sup>100</sup> The fact of Mohammed's wide-ranging influence was not lost on Islamic states eager to gain influence over U.S. foreign policy. But he has rejected any lobbying role for himself, along with an unprecedented opportunity to employ the international pressure of Arab states to improve the social conditions of Black Americans.

### **A Ruffling of Ill Winds: The Rebirth of the NOI**

IN EARLY 1977 WALLACE MUHAMMAD claimed that only five or six ministers had departed the organization as a result of his newly implemented policies.<sup>101</sup> Significantly, however, old-guard administrators John Ali, Abass

Rassoull, and Raymond Sharieff had been ousted.<sup>102</sup> Minister Silis Muhammad departed the organization soon after it was opened up to whites, as did Minister Jeremiah Shabazz. Independently of one another, Muslim chapters in Culver City, California and Dothan, Alabama began publishing newspapers bearing the name of *Muhammad Speaks* after the original organ was renamed *Bilalian News*.<sup>103</sup> Then, beginning in early 1978, the WCIW reportedly suffered a plunge in membership, an event given impetus, no doubt, by the official departure of Abdul Aleem Farrakhan, the name by which Louis Farrakhan was then known. Details are lacking, but it was apparently this deteriorating state of affairs which forced the resignation of Wallace Muhammad as organizational head in the fall of that same year, and his replacement by a regional council of *six imams*.<sup>104</sup> By May 1985 the group, after having gone by the name of the American Muslim Mission for a period of five years, elected to disband, allowing its several hundred masjids to go their own way.

MINISTER FARRAKHAN'S BREAK with the WCIW became known to the general public in March of 1978, but he had already indicated plans to reestablish the Nation of Islam that previous November, despite having been offered back his former position as head of the Harlem mosque several months earlier.<sup>105</sup> When dissatisfied followers of W. Deen Muhammad departed the WCIW, however, they did not do so in order to attach themselves to a reconstituted NOI, for there was no public organization to join, no open proselytizing on Farrakhan's part — a cautionary lesson gleaned, no doubt, from Malcolm X's tragic departure from the parent organization fourteen years earlier. The new movement began subterraneanly, reproducing itself in temporary storefronts and makeshift back rooms. As one observer notes, "Not until 1980 did the Minister start picking up momentum with a national telephone conference call to followers. The first Saviour's Day convention in 1981 attracted an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 people. A permanent office wasn't acquired until the Final Call building was purchased in 1982."<sup>106</sup> But

the real organizational takeoff had to await Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984. From that point forward the NOI enjoyed a meteoric rise which has resulted in the presence today of some 120 mosques in U.S. urban centers and several internationally, as well as the edification of a multi-million dollar economic empire dependent, in large measure, on public funds.<sup>107</sup> Included are not-for-profit organizations such as the *Final Call* newspaper, Muhammad University of Islam, and a network of mosques which themselves engage in business, but also profit-making enterprises privately held by members of Minister Farrakhan's inner circle. The latter include companies engaged in soap and cosmetics distribution, pharmaceuticals, media ventures, restaurants, clothing, and, most lucratively, apartment-complex security firms tied to government funding.<sup>108</sup>

### Old Teachings v. New Realities

IT IS APPARENT, IN RETROSPECT, that in the late 1970s and early 1980s conditions allowing a return to an unmodified NOI ideology and practice were far from conducive. At the forefront lay challenges spawned by the triumphs of the civil rights movement as well as the mounting social problems of African countries in the wake of formal decolonization. Second, the collapse of inner-city economic life wrought by the deindustrializing of America had undercut the dreams of traditional entrepreneurial nationalism. Third, fueled by immigrant forces as well as African American conversions, an unprecedented dissemination of traditional Islam throughout the U.S. had taken place. And, finally, there existed a double problem bearing upon Farrakhan's own legitimation. One concerned his relation to both the Prophet Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad, after his having initially endorsed the direction taken by the WCIW. The other arose with respect to the moribund civil rights establishment, which involved obtaining its blessings for his ability to rally grass-roots blacks while remaining aloof from actual civil rights projects. Compared to the earlier climate of corporate liberalism, however, the rise of ultra-right politi-

cal formations in the eighties posed no clear disadvantages to a reconstituted NOI which, like its predecessor, embraced a highly conservative social outlook.

PASSAGE AND SUBSEQUENT ENFORCEMENT of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts in 1964 and 1965 transformed the domestic political landscape in numerous ways. The effect upon African American nationalism in particular was to lay to rest a principal source of African American political alienation: the suppression of black voting rights in the South. Many African Americans — particularly those undergoing socialization in subsequent years — would begin to think of themselves as undisputed citizens of the United States. Then too, as time went by, the mounting social difficulties of nominally independent African states — as measured in outbreaks of famines, plagues, and ethnically based political strife — rendered increasingly bleak the utopian vision of an African American “return” to the continent. The overall result could only be a further undermining of traditional African American arguments for domestic territorial autonomy as well as emigrationism.<sup>109</sup> Adjusting to these new realities, Minister Farrakhan declared in 1985 that:

God wants us to build a new world order. A new world order based on peace, justice and equality. Where do we start? . . . [P]hysical separation is greatly feared [by whites], and it is not now desired by the masses of black people, but America is not willing to give us eight or ten states, or even one state. Let's be reasonable. . . . What we propose tonight is a solution that is in between two extremes. If we cannot go back to Africa, and America will not give us a separate territory, then what can we do here and now to redress our own grievances? . . . [W]e propose that we use the blessings that we have received from our sojourn in America to do for ourselves what we have been asking the whites in this nation to do for us.<sup>110</sup>

What “doing for self” meant, in Farrakhan's words, was the “redirecting of our 204 billion dollar purchasing power.” But at the close of the 20th century, such a strategy could only mean a return to the program of economic nationalism advanced by Booker T. Washington a century ago, with its attendant downplaying of civil and political rights. Such an outlook remains problematic even without the NOI's former policy of denounc-

ing these rights, and especially so given today's conditions.<sup>111</sup> For the NOI, the collapse of inner-city economic life in the 1980s revealed a two-fold edge: on the one side, a growth in the numbers of disaffected African Americans who would become potential candidates for NOI recruitment; on the other, evaporating community resources that a revitalized NOI could no longer draw upon in its attempt to regain and even surpass Elijah Muhammad's former economic empire. Simply put, the time-tested entrepreneurial nationalism of former decades was no longer sufficient. Despite five million dollars in start-up capital from Libyan Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, Farrakhan's P.O.W.E.R. line of Clean & Fresh toiletries remains in a state of economic limbo — not quite moribund, but not exactly thriving either.<sup>112</sup> The NOI's fish importation business, Blue Seas, was dissolved in 1982; its successor, Blue Seas Chicago, faced an identical fate ten years later.<sup>113</sup> Faced with uninspiring returns from such ventures, Minister Farrakhan, following the lead of W. Deen Mohammed, began to solicit government contracts — a complete turn-about from earlier NOI practices.<sup>114</sup>

In the late 1930s NOI members had refused social security identification numbers, regarding them as the “mark of the beast.” In soliciting funds from the “white folks' government” half a century later, Farrakhan could no longer portray federal and state agencies as undistilled repositories of satanic influence. The new trajectory began with the NOI's successful attempt to rid a Baltimore housing project of drug dealers; thereafter the NOI sought federal and local monies for similar purposes in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Dayton, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and elsewhere.<sup>115</sup> The irony is that the positive cash flow to security firms privately owned by members of the Farrakhan family circle depends upon the continued existence of inner-city crime.

UNDER ELIJAH MUHAMMAD the NOI developed modest retail and service enterprises centered around its urban mosques, as well as an unprofitable, small-scale agribusiness. But as one commentator noted, the organization “never entered such lucrative

fields as middle-level retailing, wholesaling, manufacturing, insurance, and investment."<sup>116</sup> Recently, following what has been characterized in the press as a three-year plan, the NOI opened a five million dollar food-service complex, called Salaam Restaurant, on 79th Street in Chicago — a dramatic, albeit local, achievement in substance as well as symbol.<sup>117</sup> Also planned is the expansion of the NOI's trucking firm, restaurant outlets in four U.S. cities, and a 2,000-seat auditorium.<sup>118</sup> Such ventures are not impractical to attain, despite the present economic climate, but will nonetheless require onerous tithing of devoted followers. Yet there also have been economic moves which seem far more symbolic than substantial. For example, while Farrakhan's partial reclaiming of former NOI land in southwest Georgia in early 1995 clearly indicated his determination to reassemble the NOI's former economic empire, the reality was that, under Elijah Muhammad's direction, the farms had amassed debts of nearly three-quarters of a million dollars per year. Presently the NOI is said to own 2,000 acres of land in Michigan and Georgia, with plans to acquire 8,000 more. But the question remains as to whether the present-day NOI has truly managed the art of running a small-scale agribusiness, or whether it has allowed its economic vision to be clouded by nostalgic yearnings.<sup>119</sup>

### Legitimation: Responses to Tradition and Orthodoxy

IN ELECTING TO RETURN to the old teachings, Farrakhan faced a two-fold problem of legitimation: finding acceptance among the NOI faithful as the Messenger's rightful heir, on the one hand; and on the other, cultivating a sense of ambivalence, if not approval, within traditional Islamic circles regarding his spiritual authenticity. Formidable obstacles blocked Minister Farrakhan's belated bid to insert himself in the direct line of leadership succession to Elijah Muhammad. For three years, after all, the world was made to understand that Wallace Muhammad, son of Elijah, had been chosen by the Messenger of Allah as his successor. And had not Louis Farrakhan himself proclaimed that "No ill winds will ruffle this divine nation. No one

among us is high enough to tie the shoelaces of Wallace"?<sup>120</sup> Since a direct endorsement from Elijah Muhammad was no longer possible, Farrakhan was forced to pursue a more symbolic route to legitimation. By purchasing the Messenger's former homes in Chicago and Phoenix, as well as the NOI's original mosque and school on South Stony Island in Chicago, he has placed himself literally at the seat of former power. Second, by gradually reassembling the economic empire of his former teacher he is showing himself to be the Messenger's equal in secular affairs — a claim which, of course, could never be stated openly without dissolving the mystique of Mr. Muhammad's proffered omniscience.

Fortuitously, the critical endorsement which once seemed impossible, eventually came to pass. In the fall of 1989 Minister Farrakhan revealed that while visiting Mexico *four years earlier* he had received a *vision* in which he was transported inside the NOI's Mother Plane (better known as Ezekiel's Wheel of the Old Testament). There, via a loudspeaker, the voice of Elijah Muhammad came to him bearing a cryptic warning regarding U.S. plans to wage war on Libya. But it appears that the more important objective of Farrakhan's thoroughly remarkable press conference on the subject— captured on videotape and widely circulated by the NOI in pamphlet form as well — was to demonstrate an unassailable affirmation of Elijah Muhammad's support for him.<sup>121</sup>

EQUAL IN IMPORT to the partial civil rights victories of the 1960s was an amendment to the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, effective at the very end of 1965, which sparked the entry of foreign-born Muslims into the U.S. by the hundreds of thousands. From 1965 to 1986 the number of Muslim immigrants admitted to the U.S. each year (most of whom hailed from the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia) would multiply by a factor of eight. By the latter year the total number of Muslims living within U.S. borders would be estimated at 4 million.<sup>122</sup> Carried past immigration checkpoints by an unprecedented wave of adherents, traditional Islam rapidly spread to key U.S. cities, further narrowing the possibilities for

the Nation of Islam to pass off its private doctrine as being synonymous with Qur'anic wisdom. The pressure on Farrakhan to drop, or at least to modify, basic NOI beliefs would become formidable.

ONE OF THE MOST VISIBLE BREECHEs OF Islamic tradition existed in the form of prayer originally taught by Master Fard. In order to close the ritualistic gap, a West African sheikh was subsequently brought in to instruct the faithful in matters of traditional prayer.<sup>123</sup> Regarding the vast difference between its projected doctrine and traditional Islam, however, the NOI has resorted to a number of explanations, including a Cabalist twist affirming the existence of two Qur'ans — the exoteric, manifest version with which all Muslims are familiar, and a more profound, esoteric one whose meaning can be divulged only through numerological analysis of the former.<sup>124</sup> But when all else fails the organization reverts to Elijah Muhammad's stock explanation: the NOI version of Islam is tailored to African American conditions, while that of Arabs is excessively ethnocentric, if not tainted by racism. (See accompanying sidebar, "Africa 1994: Saviour's Day, Ghana"). In contrast to an earlier era, on the other hand, the demonizing of Euro-Americans has been more or less downplayed, bringing the NOI that much closer to the universal ideals portrayed in the Qur'an.<sup>125</sup>

Facing potential isolation due to the growing numbers of traditional Muslims in the U.S., Minister Farrakhan has sought alliances with black secular organizations in a way reminiscent of the earlier, fruitless outreaches of Elijah Muhammad. Also, his attempted links to the Congressional Black Caucus were likely viewed as according greater potential access to government contracts. Moreover, given the demonstrated reality of African American citizenship and the apparent lack of political alternatives, participation in electoral politics (an issue which Elijah Muhammad had treated equivocally in earlier years, but without actually ever having endorsed a candidate<sup>126</sup>) would be increasingly difficult for Farrakhan to avoid, especially given the overt political activities of W. Deen Muhammad.<sup>127</sup> The careful groundwork laid in

developing these political liaisons was subsequently uprooted by public outrage over continuing anti-Jewish remarks made by Minister Farrakhan and one of his associates (now former spokesman), Khallid Abdul Muhammad.<sup>128</sup> Questions remain as to why Farrakhan resorted to anti-Jewish diatribes in the first instance, and why he continues to hold his ground on the issue despite a resultant undermining of his business enterprises and political alliances.

### Anti-Semitism and the Clash of Right-Wing Nationalisms

ONCE AGAIN, the history of the UNIA proves instructive. When the political content of Garveyism shifted to the right in mid-1921, its characterization of the chief enemy of black liberation in the U.S. underwent a transmigration as well — from the dominant classes, government, craft unions, and groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, to *black people themselves*. "Having had the wrong education as a start in his racial career, the Negro has become his own worst enemy," wrote Garvey in 1923, responding to formidable attacks which had mostly to do with his repudiation of civil rights for black Americans.<sup>129</sup> In this way, the UNIA's African American detractors conveniently served as an external threat contributing to the organization's internal cohesion, as well as a ready scapegoat whenever UNIA plans failed to evolve as anticipated. Moreover, the militant, public condemnations and threats which Garvey unleashed upon such critics not only stoked his mass popularity, but also tended to obscure the conservative political content of his domestic message. Needless to say, his attacks upon civil rights advocates also endeared him to trenchant Negrophobes who, when all was said and done, had no more use for Marcus Garvey than for those whom he publicly chastised.

IDENTICAL FACTORS HOLD TRUE with respect to Minister Farrakhan's effective characterizing of Jews as a principal enemy of African Americans, beginning in mid-1984.<sup>130</sup> It is worth remembering, however, that when criticisms of Jews arose within the old NOI,

# Africa, 1994: Saviours' Day, Ghana

AN EGYPTIAN COLUMNIST NOTED that Minister Farrakhan first made press headlines in Africa in the mid-1980s as a result of his "much publicised friendly relations with the Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi." Broadening those African connections, the NOI's First International Saviours' Day was held in Accra, Ghana from October 6 through 9, 1994. NOI leaders were accompanied by some 1,500 to 2,000 black Americans on the trip, including the rap group Public Enemy and other musicians. There Farrakhan called for a new vision which would bring about economic self-sufficiency for the African continent.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the conference the NOI's Minister of Health announced plans to construct a \$20 million factory in Ghana to manufacture medical supplies — syringes, drugs, and drug containers — for local use as well as export. High on the project's agenda was the introduction of a device for HIV screening known as target HIV, "whose results could be read visually and obtained within five minutes."<sup>3</sup> The NOI has had no prior experience in running such an operation, however, and it remains to be seen whether the enterprise will get off the ground.

There were Ghanaian supporters as well as detractors of International Saviours' Day, and it would be unfair to draw up a balance sheet based upon newspaper accounts alone. The arguments of some of these contrary voices, however, were not without ballast. Declaring itself in opposition to "racialized" politics, for example, the *Ghanaian Chronicle* affirmed that:

We do not care about some phantom White man sitting in down town Santa Barbara or in Accra or Harare. We do not care about the colour of an oppressor or tyrant. A tyrant is a tyrant, and it is more painful when the oppressor happens to be black and African. Unfortunately, that is the situation in most of black Africa which has been enslaved by military men of stunted intelligence who overnight turn into four-piece wearing, agbada clad teflon democrats and terrorise their own citizenry.<sup>4</sup>

Many of Africa's problems were created by white colonialists, conceded the editorial, "But 90 percent of our problems are down to the kind of leaders we have in place today who allow themselves to be used. And we find it utterly repulsive for Minister Farrakhan to give succor to them, and not spare a thought or a word of counsel to them."<sup>5</sup> The NOI's Islamic heterodoxy was also attacked by Sheikh M. M. Gedel, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, who remarked that "any other addi-

tional message that comes after the prophet Mohammed, is not proper and must be rejected."<sup>6</sup>

Farrakhan's call to Islam in Africa also raised the issue of white supremacist attitudes among Arab Muslims: "to my Arab brothers and sisters," exclaimed Farrakhan on International Saviours' Day,

you have to be very careful about how you spread Islam. You cannot spread a cultural imperialism in the name of Islam. . . . If you feel that Islam is the true path, then ask me to accept Islam but don't try to make me an Arab when I am African. Allow me to keep my African personality, my African culture. What has happened in Africa is that the seed of white supremacy is even seen in Islam in the way some of my Arab brothers treat their African brothers in Islam. They are not treated as equal. They are treated as somebody who joined a faith that doesn't belong to them.<sup>7</sup>

Anti-black Arab racism is indeed a problem. But by criticizing Arab Muslims, and thereby seeking to undercut the role of traditional Islam in Africa south of the Sahara, Minister Farrakhan appears to ignore the region's twelve-century-old Islamic legacy — which includes the wide-ranging historical influence of indigenous African Muslim leaders such as Al-Hajj Omaru and Usman dan Fodio.<sup>8</sup> Given the historical background, it remains to be seen just how Minister Farrakhan's approach to Islam, tied to the theme of oppositional culture, will be received in West, Central, and East Africa.

— Ernest Allen, Jr.

## Notes

- 1 Gamal Nkrumah, "Nation Among Nations," *Al-Ahram Weekly* (28 July-3 August 1994).
- 2 *Ghanaian Times* (October 10, 1994): 1, 3; [*Accra Daily Graphic* (October 10, 1994): 1, 9; *Final Call* (November 2, 1994): 2-3, 7-8, 34.
- 3 *Ghanaian Times* (October 10, 1994): 8.
- 4 *Ghanaian Chronicle* (October 10-12, 1994): 5.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Final Call* (November 2, 1994): 31.
- 8 Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (1888; rpt. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994); see also Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development from the 8th to the 20th Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982).

they tended to do so within specific contexts. One of these was experientially based, centering on the economic exploitation of blacks by Jewish landlords and merchants (usually in cities of the northeastern United States). Another concerned the negative impact of Israel, backed by the economic and military might of the U.S., on Middle East Islamic states. And a third was tied up with revelations of Israeli government support for South African apartheid. But Elijah Muhammad's NOI was never overly concerned with the subject of Jews: "We make no distinction between Jews and non-Jews so long as they are all white," Malcolm X once stated. "To do so would be to imply that we like some whites better than others. This would be discrimination, and we do not believe in discrimination."<sup>131</sup> However, what Farrakhan was to learn in the 1980s, perhaps by happenstance, was that his verbal attacks upon Jews carried the same political advantages as had Marcus Garvey's diatribes against his black critics in the 1920s, including the support of the ultra-right. Just as Garvey had elicited the support of Negrophobes for his attacks on civil rights advocates, so did Farrakhan gain the approval of powerful right-wing, anti-Semitic forces for his verbal assaults against Jews. For example, shortly after the minister's anti-Jewish campaign took hold in the mid-1980s, the organ of the ultra-right National States Rights Party denounced a recent publicizing by the media of Martin Luther King's pro-Jewish statements of the 1960s: "The future leader of the blacks will not be a King who bows to the Jews," one of its articles concluded, "IT WILL BE A FARRAKHAN WHO HAS THE GUTS TO STAND UP TO THE JEWS!"<sup>132</sup>

FARRAKHAN'S ANTI-JEWISH STANCE brought additional benefits as well: a generating of publicity disproportionate to the actual instances of such remarks uttered in public, as well and an appeal to anti-Zionist elements throughout the Arab world. Aside from those instances where his remarks were twisted or edited by the media to make them appear what they were not, Jewish Americans had every reason to be offended by his numerous, confirmed statements bearing an

anti-Jewish character.<sup>133</sup> The continued proliferation of anti-Semitic rhetoric has placed principled Jewish organizations in a quandary. Any reluctance on their part to respond to anti-Semitism is to invite its spread; but to overreact, on the other hand — for example, by presumptuously demanding that African American organizations repudiate any connections with Farrakhan — is to risk providing ammunition for Farrakhan's classic, anti-Semitic claims of "Jewish domination and control." However, in much the same way that Minister Farrakhan has offered a distorted portrait of Jews as the principal enemy of blacks, right-wing Jewish institutions such as the Anti-Defamation League have themselves dishonestly characterized blacks as the most dangerous, single bloc of anti-Semites in the United States.<sup>134</sup> As one perceptive journalist remarked, "One can only speculate on the reasons why so much time and energy are wasted savaging Farrakhan, especially when there are white fascist paramilitary organizations running around the country dedicated to the physical extermination of their many 'enemies,' most prominently American Jews."<sup>135</sup>

Fortunately or otherwise, the issue of "black anti-Semitism" as the main danger to Jewish Americans took a back seat following the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building by (apparent) members of an ultra-right paramilitary group, only one of many which seem quite prepared to use force to eliminate Jews and African Americans (not to mention government agents of whatever ethno-racial background) from the face of the earth. And, most recently, Farrakhan's approaches to Jews have tended to be vacillatory and equivocal, intermixing anti-Semitic outbursts on one day with violin concerts of atonement on the next. For Farrakhan as for Garvey, the challenge of reconciling competing demands of mass organizational dynamics and primitive capital accumulation appears to be an onerous one.

### The Million Man March and Its Aftermath

CONSTITUTING ONE OF THE MOST UPLIFTING media events of the 20th century, the Million Man March held on October 16, 1995 marked the highest point of Minister

Louis Farrakhan's tenure over the Nation of Islam.<sup>136</sup> Celebrated as a "Holy Day of Atonement and Reconciliation," the purpose of this Washington, D.C. pilgrimage, according to Farrakhan, was to "reconcile our spiritual inner beings and to redirect our focus to developing our communities, strengthening our families, working to uphold and protect our civil and human rights, and empowering ourselves through the Spirit of God, more effective use of our dollars, and through the power of the vote."<sup>137</sup> As a symbolic gathering, the Million Man March was an unqualified success. But the real measure of its significance would lie in its "follow-up" activities, the presence or absence of which would determine whether the march would be enshrined as an perennial "feel-good" symbol, or more hopefully function as a catalyst for a genuine grassroots movement capable of fulfilling its stated aims. The answer would rest in the quality of programs and mechanisms that march leaders would put into operation, as well as in their determination to carry them out. A year following the Million Man March, the balance sheet offers decidedly mixed results.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL VEHICLES assigned to transforming the energies of the march into coordinated activity<sup>3</sup> at the grassroots level were the some three hundred forty Local Organizing Committees which originally brought the march into being (and which were reportedly composed of local political, religious, business, and community leaders), and the National African American Leadership Summit (NAALS) chaired by former NAACP head Benjamin Chavis. Organs such as the *Final Call* tend to carry little information on the progress of such groups, and independently tracking their work is a difficult task. However, charges did arise just months following the march that NAALS, although conceived as a collective black leadership forum, was not truly functioning in that spirit.<sup>138</sup> On a more positive note, even mainstream media most hostile to Farrakhan have conceded that the positive spirit generated by the Million Man March has inspired a greater participation of black men in the affairs of their communities. In the Denver

black community, for example, the fire-bombing of homes by youth gangs this past winter was met by African American public pressure organized by the local march committee, thereby (arguably) contributing to a curtailing of gang activities.<sup>139</sup> To cite yet another positive example closer to my own locality, NOI Mosque No. 13 in Springfield, Massachusetts, under the leadership of Minister Yusuf Muhammad, has enrolled a large cross-section of the Springfield black community in its Million Man March Committee, which meets regularly to plan proactive interventions in local affairs.<sup>140</sup>

Judged by the effusive rhetoric of the Million Man March, one would think that the NOI's national leadership might have poured considerable resources into such Local Organizing Committees, identifying those which have been most successful in community outreach projects and publicizing their specific successes as well as organizing techniques. To the contrary, three months following the march Louis Farrakhan embarked on a World Friendship Tour which carried him to some twenty countries in Africa and the Middle East. This tour became, in essence, an *international evangelical crusade*, the aim of which was to "take the spirit of the . . . Million Man March to Africa and establish an international Day of Atonement, Responsibility and Reconciliation."<sup>141</sup> (However, the quixotic content of Minister Farrakhan's World Friendship Tour theme, not to mention his subsequent role as apologist for General Sani Abacha's brutal military regime in Nigeria, should not be allowed to obscure the noteworthy fact that Minister Farrakhan is the first African American since El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz to be received by African and Middle East governments as a *de facto* head of state.)

Last October, at an observance held in front of United Nations headquarters to commemorate the first anniversary of the march, Minister Farrakhan declared that the purpose of the anniversary was to "atone for violence, murder, and war, and to call the kings and rulers of the earth to atonement for violence, murder, and war; and to call the members of the human family, and our Black family, in particular, to the spirit and

process of atonement for violence in the world and in our communities and the lust to kill that pervades this society, and pervades the earth.”<sup>142</sup> But even if “violence, murder, and war” are not endemic to the human condition, it is clear that Farrakhan’s unfocused “soul-saving” crusade is a goal without a foreseeable end. On a more tangible plane, on the other hand, march organizers also convened a National Political Convention — the agenda of which included a call for transforming American politics to a “God-centered system” — on September 27-29 at St. Louis. But outside sources claimed a gathering of only some 400 to 600 delegates, with an additional 5,000 persons in attendance at Minister Farrakhan’s keynote address. Where Minister Farrakhan may go from here is anyone’s guess, but his direction at this time would seem to be other than towards the strengthening of grassroots community organizations over which the Nation of Islam would have difficulty exerting direct control, and therefore away from some of the more tangible mandates of the Million Man March.<sup>143</sup>

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OVER A HALF-CENTURY AGO, sociologist Erdmann Doane Beynon likened the Nation of Islam and groups of similar mien to a tree which grew out of conditions faced by migrant blacks in northern urban centers. “After one branch has grown, flourished, and begun to decay, another shoots up to begin over again the same cycle, though always with an increasing degree of race-consciousness and anti-Caucasian prejudice.”<sup>144</sup> With the southern black migratory wave long having reached a termination, but with hopes for African American economic justice throttled by a slowly decaying “post-industrial” capitalism, offshoots of African American millenarian movements continue to increase, multiply, and divide. The present-day NOI continues to attract adherents who, after achieving some degree of economic parity, may yet pass into the ranks of a more traditional Islamic constituency in the United States. A far more charismatic showman than Warith Deen Mohammed, Louis

Farrakhan also remains the militant voice of the downtrodden, the dispossessed among African Americans, while his more traditional counterpart tends to represent that of the relatively more economically secure.<sup>145</sup> The long-range indications of both tendencies appear to be that African American Muslims as a whole will remain a conservative political force wedded to the vision of economic empire. From either perspective, the upward economic mobility of black Americans is scheduled to arrive in the form of capital accumulation by brute force, large proceeds of which are actually destined for private bank accounts, *zakat* notwithstanding. The alternative, one admittedly difficult as well as dangerous, is a *collective* assault upon the structures of institutionalized inequity. If a large-scale, more socially progressive African American Islamic movement is ever to emerge, its most likely point of departure will not be from within existing organizations, but rather a splintering off of new groups from such bodies against the backdrop of an emerging, broad-based secular movement for social change in the United States.

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## Notes

- 1 Carol L. Stone, "Estimate of Muslims Living in America," in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 27.
- 2 Earlier influences came, of course, from enslaved African Muslims during the antebellum period; however, between life in the slave quarters and that of 20th-century African American communities, no demonstrable continuity of Islamic institutions can be found. From 1920 onward a more durable, albeit heterodox source of Islamic teachings was available through the Ahmadiyyah movement. See Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Proud Exiles* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming 1997); Michael A. Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," *Journal of Southern History* 60 (November 1994): 671-710; Clyde-Ahmad Winters, "Afro-American Muslims — From Slavery to Freedom," *Islamic Studies*, 17.4 (1978): 187-205; and Richard B. Turner, "The Ahmadiyya Mission to Blacks in the United States in the 1920s," *Journal of Religious Thought* 44 (Winter-Spring 1988): 50-66.
- 3 Information for most of these groups is extremely sketchy. The LFNOI, with some twenty mosques located mainly on the eastern seaboard and in the South, was founded in August 1977 and has published its newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*, since 1984. Publisher of the weekly newspaper, *Your Muhammad Speaks*, and in existence at least since 1992, the UNOI also claims mosques in Missouri and Connecticut. From the Highland Park enclave of Detroit, Michigan, John Muhammad's organization publishes its own newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks Continues*. H. Khalif Khalifa reports the existence of some ten independent organizations (the aforementioned groups comprised) bearing the NOI name in one form or another, including a mosque in Cleveland, Ohio, two in Richmond, Virginia, and one in the Bronx, New York City. Details concerning the LFNOI and its ideology have recently become available in Peter Noel, "One Nation?," *Vibe* (February 1996), 73; and Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996), 215-23. For further, brief information on the UNOI, see Peter Noel, "The Final Call: Power Struggle in the Nation of Islam," *Village Voice* (February 15, 1994): 23, 29; for John Muhammad's NOI see Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 83-84.
- 4 An event virtually unnoticed outside New York City at the time, in 1964, after departing the NOI, Clarence 13X formed a group of approximately 200 youths recruited from the streets of Harlem and Brooklyn. Popularizing the NOI's esoteric, internally-held doctrines as its own, the Five Percenters, as the loosely-knit group came to be called, would have far-reaching effects on black popular culture of the 1980s. See Prince-A-Cuba, "Black Gods of the Inner City," *Cnosis* 25 (Fall 1992): 56-63; Prince-A-Cuba, ed., *Our Mecca Is Harlem: Clarence 13X (Allah) and the Five Percent* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1995); Yusuf Nuruddin, "The Five Percenters: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths," in *Muslim Communities in North America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 109-32; and Ernest Allen, Jr., "Making the Strong Survive: The Contours and Contradictions of 'Message Rap,'" in *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and HipHop Culture*, ed. William Eric Perkins (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 159-91.
- 5 And there are those who have chosen to remain, more or less, on the sidelines, opting instead to preserve and propagate the original teachings of Elijah Muhammad in their pristine form: for example, in Chicago, the Committee for the Remembrance of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad [CROE], led by Munir Muhammad; United Brothers and United Sisters Communications Systems, based at Hampton, Virginia and headed by H. Khalif Khalifah, publisher of the newspaper, *Your Black Books Guide*, as well as numerous books and pamphlets; in Atlanta (recently relocated from Cleveland) the group Secretarius MEMPS [Messenger Elijah Muhammad Propagation Society], publisher/distributor of *Message to the Blackman: The Magazine*, audiotaped speeches by Elijah Muhammad, and other works, led by Minister Nasir Makr Hakim; and Sam Shabazz Muhammad's African-American Genealogy Society, located in Compton, California, which has reproduced, in two volumes, many of Elijah Muhammad's c. 1950s newspaper articles.
- 6 Abass Rassoul, "What Must Be Done . . . After the Coming of God!," *It's Time to Know!* [UNOI] 2 (Fall 1994): 14-17; *Reparations Petition for United Nations Assistance Under Resolution 1503 (XLVIII) on Behalf of African-Americans in the United States of America* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1994). The equating of Brother Solomon and King Solomon is not unlike the practice accorded Elijah Muhammad, who was often held to be the prophet Muhammad of the Qur'an as well as the prophet Elijah of the Bible. Most recently, however, in a leaflet advertising UNOI meetings in Kansas City in July 1995, Brother Solomon claimed the mantle of "Allah."
- 7 *Your Black Books Guide* 5 (February 1994): 9-10. A January 1994 issue of *Muhammad Speaks* [LFNOI] reportedly carried a public apology from LFNOI head Silis Muhammad to Louis Farrakhan for past criticisms of the latter's policies.
- 8 For a panoramic, historical view of African American nationalism through primary sources, see John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, ed., *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970).
- 9 By way of contrast, in 1854 a convention of African American emigrationists declared — notwithstanding their conviction to depart the U.S. for a more

- hospitable territory — “That as men and equals, we demand every political right, privilege and position to which the whites are eligible in the United States, and we will attain to these, or accept of nothing.” Herbert Aptheker, comp. and ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States: From Colonial Times through the Civil War* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951), 365. Whether resulting from a fear of deportation or simply callousness on his part, Garvey’s status as a British subject was undoubtedly a factor in his cavalier dismissal of black rights in the U.S.
- 10 As NOI founder W. D. Fard noted in his *Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1*, “The original people [of Africa] live on this continent and they are the ones who strayed away from civilization and are living a jungle life.” In a criticism of African American cultural nationalists made four decades later, Elijah Muhammad could write: “For nearly forty years I have been preaching to the Black man in America that we should accept our own; and instead of the Black man going to the decent side of his own, he goes back seeking traditional Africa, and the way they did in jungle life and the way you see in some uncivilized parts of Africa today.” *The Fall of America* (Chicago: Muhammad’s Temple of Islam No. 2, 1973), 150.
  - 11 See Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press and American Theological Library Association, 1978).
  - 12 *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, ed. Amy Jacques-Garvey, dbl. vol. (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 2: 126.
  - 13 See Ernest Allen, Jr., “Waiting for Tojo: The Pro-Japan Vigil of Black Missourians, 1932-1943,” *Gateway Heritage* 16 (Fall 1995): 50. During the 1940s the NOI’s Fruit of Islam apparently drilled with wooden rifle stocks as well; such paraphernalia were among items seized from the organization by federal authorities during World War II.
  - 14 The Moroccan and MSTA flags are defined by a green, five-pointed star placed against a red backdrop. The Moroccan star is drawn in the form of thick, overlapping line segments, whereas that of the MSTA is solid in color. Both Turkish and NOI flags consist of a white star and crescent inscribed on a field of red. However, the concave edge of the crescent faces to the right on the Turkish banner, whereas that of the NOI’s faces left. Additionally, the NOI flag displays the letters F, J, E, and I (Freedom, Justice, Equality, Islam) sequentially at each of the corners, beginning counter-clockwise at the upper right.
  - 15 See August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T.* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1963); Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Robert L. Factor, *Black Response to America: Men, Ideals, and Organizations from Frederick Douglass to the NAACP* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1970).
  - 16 See Ernest Allen, Jr., “The New Negro: Explorations in Identity and Social Consciousness, 1910-1922,” in *1915: The Cultural Moment* ed. Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 48-68.
  - 17 In this light, the question as to whether or not the UNIA believed in either a partial or wholesale black American emigration to Africa proved irrelevant: unable to realize either goal, the principle issue for those who remained in the U.S. was that of securing full civil and political liberties — an aim which Garvey derided time and time again.
  - 18 See Max Nordau, *Max Nordau to His People* (New York: Scopus, 1941), 199; Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement: The Untold Story of the Secret Agreement Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), 76-77. For a brief comparison of the “Zionisms” of Theodore Herzl and Marcus Garvey, see Arnold Rose, *The Negro’s Morale: Group Identity and Protest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1949), 43-44.
  - 19 Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, 2:71, 260-61; E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 188-90; *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, edited by Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), IV: 679; Ethel Wolf-skill Hedlin, “Earnest Cox and Colonization: A White Racist’s Response to Black Repatriation, 1923-1966,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Duke University, 1974), 106-107; Theodore G. Bilbo, “An African Home for Our Negroes,” *The Living Age*, 358 (June 1940): 328, 330; Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *Anyplace But Here* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), 208-211; *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1989), 122-24; Edwin Black, “Farrakhan and the Jews,” *Midstream* 32 (June/July 1986): 3-4; *New York Times* (October 3, 1985): 19; *Washington Post* (October 5, 1985): 11; *Time* (October 14, 1985): 41; *Washington Times* (November 11, 1985): 7; Mattias Gardell, “The Sun of Islam Will Rise in the West: Minister Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam in the Latter Days,” in *Muslim Communities in North America*, 38-39.
  - 20 See Black, *The Transfer Agreement*, esp. 71-82; see also Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story: Rebel and Statesman: The Early Years* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1956-1961), 399-415.
  - 21 However, a debate concerning the appropriateness of Islam did occur within the UNIA in 1922, and Ahmadis made minor inroads into the organization the following year. See Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 75-77; *Negro World* (September 2, 1922): 12; (September 8, 1923): 10.
  - 22 The Ali translation contains four explanatory footnotes referencing the anticipated coming of the Messiah, which may explain the NOI’s preference

- for this particular version of the Qur'an. As Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "Aspects of Black Muslim Theology," *Studia Islamica* 53 (1981): 170 n2, has indicated, the Ahmadi-NOI connection deserves further research. See also Turner, "The Ahmadiyya Mission to Blacks" and, for general insight, Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
- 23 Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *History of the Shrine: Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Inc.* (Detroit: AEANMS, 1993), 15. For information on Prince Hall Masonry, see Charles H. Wesley, *Prince Hall: Life and Legacy* (Washington, DC: United Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, Prince Hall Affiliation, 1977); Loretta J. Williams, *Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980); Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *Black Square and Compass: 200 Years of Prince Hall Freemasonry* (1981; rpt. Richmond, VA: Macoy, 1989); William A. Muraskin, *Middle-Class Blacks in A White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). A social history of black Freemasons is still sorely lacking.
- 24 George Livingston Root, *Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America*, rvsd. ed. (San Antonio, TX: 1916), 9. Ali actually held the position of Caliph from 656 to 661 A.D.
- 25 *Constitution and Law of the Imperial Council of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine for North America* (1896), 11.
- 26 See, for example, Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Charleston, SC: 1871); Manly P. Hall, *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* (1928; rpt. Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1988). A critique of a number of these metaphysical currents within Freemasonry can be found in Henry W. Coil, *Conversations on Freemasonry* (Richmond, VA: Macoy, 1976).
- 27 This identification, which gathered steam in the early 19th century, was the product of the imaginations of Orientalists, Freemasons, and secret-society conspiracy buffs in their studies of esoteric Islamic sects; of documented affinities between Bektashi Sufis and Freemasons throughout the Middle East; and, towards the latter part of the century, the actual membership of numerous grand viziers and other Ottoman functionaries in the Masonic lodges of Anatolian Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Europe.
- 28 Elijah Muhammad, *The Secrets of Freemasonry* (Cleveland: Secretarius Publications, 1994), 39. See also Hatim A. Sahib, "The Nation of Islam," unpublished M.A. dissertation (University of Chicago, 1951), 90; Elijah Muhammad, "The Truth," rpt. in Sam Shabazz Muhammad, comp., *The Truth, Book #1* (Compton, CA: African-American Genealogical Society, n.d.), 4; and Elijah Muhammad, *The Theology of Time* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1992), 282-86. For a critique of Freemasonry from an Islamic perspective, see Mustafa El-Amin, *Al-Islam, Christianity, & Freemasonry* (Jersey City, NJ: New Mind Productions, 1985).
- 29 See Peter Lamborn Wilson, "Shoot-Out at the Circle Seven Koran: Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple," *Gnosis*, 12 (Summer 1989): 44-49; Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the Margins of Islam* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993), 15-50; Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1993), 79-104; Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults in the Urban North* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 41-51; Bontemps and Conroy, *Anyplace But Here*, 205-208; McCloud, *African American Islam*, 10-11.
- 30 E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 77 n37.
- 31 But in explaining the reason for the transatlantic slave trade in his *English Lesson C1*, W. D. Fard invoked not the argument of a "fall from grace" on the part of Africans — a view held by Noble Drew Ali — but *gullibility* on the part of the enslaved themselves: deceived by a slave trader in Africa into thinking that they would receive gold, blacks foolishly allowed themselves to be captured.
- 32 For information on MSTA farms see *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (April 11, 1943) and *Berkshire Eagle* (February 10, 1944).
- 33 See Honor Ford Smith, "Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica," in *Garvey: His Work and Impact*, ed. Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1991), 73-83. For a discussion of relative female autonomy within the Newark, Philadelphia, New York City, and Baltimore branches of the NOI, see Cynthia S'themble West, *Nation Builders: Female Activism in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1970s* (New York: Garland Press, forthcoming, 1997). A section from West's original dissertation is reproduced in this present issue as "Revisiting Female Activism in the 1960s: The Newark Branch nation of Islam."
- 34 Both the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (1907; rpt. Marina Del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Co., 1991) and *Infinite Wisdom* (Chicago: deLaurence, 1923) [distributed by the Rosicrucian Order under the title *Unto Thee I Grant* (1925; rpt. San Jose, CA: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1968)], principal works from which the MSTA "Holy Koran" drew its texts, bear unsubstantiated claims of having been discovered in Tibetan monasteries. For a trenchant critique of the *Aquarian Gospel* see Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Famous "Biblical" Hoaxes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956), 15-19. The NOI's millenarian character is analyzed thoroughly in Martha Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement* (1984; rpt. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996).
- 35 See Ansari, "Aspects of Black Muslim Theology," 137-76, for the best comparative analysis of early NOI

- theology and traditional Islam. Also useful is Mustafa El-Amin, *The Religion of Islam and the Nation of Islam: What Is the Difference?* (Newark, NJ: El-Amin Productions, 1990).
- 36 See Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949); Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York: Scribner's, 1965), 291-315 esp.
- 37 See, for example, Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981); Wendell Thomas, *Hinduism Invades America* (New York: Beacon, 1930); Charles Samuel Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion; The Rise and Development of New Thought* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963); Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Richard Hughes Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995).
- 38 Q & A 4, *Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 1*; Q & A 1, 8-11, *Lost Found Moslem Lesson No. 2*. Taken into custody by Detroit police in late November, 1932, Mr. Fard reportedly told detectives that he was the "supreme being on earth." But the surprise registered by one of his followers after reading this account in the newspaper appears to leave intact the claim that the fractious issue of Fard's divinity surfaced within the NOI only following his departure from the Midwest in 1934. *Detroit Free Press* (November 24, 1932): 2; Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult," 897. The lack of hierarchy implicit in the notion that "all black men are gods" contributed no doubt, to internal challenges to Noble Drew Ali's leadership in early 1929, as well as to the plethora of Moorish "gods" who claimed suzerainty over the MSTA following Ali's death from tuberculosis that same year. Seeking to solidify the lines of organizational authority following Fard's departure in 1934, when Muhammad declared Fard to be Allah, he made certain to emphasize his own role as Allah's Messenger. See my related discussion of the Five Percent worldview in "Making the Strong Survive," 165, 187 n17.
- 39 See, for example, James H. Breasted, *The Conquest of Civilization* (New York: 1926); Hendrick Willem van Loon, *The Story of Mankind* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1921).
- 40 See *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America* (1927), Chapt. 45:1. Such a notion was reinforced, no doubt, by references to "Asiatic blacks" and "African blacks" in the work of Herodotus, as well as by claims of the existence of black civilizations in Asia on the part of 19th-century commentators such as Godfrey Higgins. See Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1970), vi-vii, 104-07; Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis or An Inquiry Into the Origin of Languages, Nations and Religions*, 2 vols. (1836; rpt. Brooklyn, NY: A&B Books, 1992), 1: 51-59.
- 41 See, for example, Griffin Lee [Paschal Beverly Randolph], *Pre-Adamite Man: The Story of the Human Race, from 35,000 to 100,000 Years Ago* (New York: Sinclair Tousey, 1863); Alexander Winchell, *Preadamites; or, A Demonstration of the Existence of Men Before Adam; Together with a Study of Their Condition, Antiquity, Racial Affinities, and Progressive Dispersion over the Earth* (Chicago: Griggs, 1886). For critiques of such views, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); George M. Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Not all 19th-century works on pre-Adamites cast their subject in a racialized context. Isabella Duncan, for example, considered the first human inhabitants of earth to have been angels, whereas James Gall held them to be devils. See Isabella Duncan, *Pre-Adamite Man*, 3rd ed. (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1860); James Gall, *Primeval Man Unveiled: or, the Anthropology of the Bible* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1871).
- 42 Examples of Fard's puzzles can be found in Bon Temps and Conroy, *Anyplace But Here*, 220-21.
- 43 Prophet W. D. Fard, *This Book Teaches the Lost Found Nation of Islam* (n.p., n.d.), Problem 13.
- 44 So much so, it seems, that during the economic upswing which took place from the late 1930s through World War II, the small, gainfully employed group which constituted the Detroit NOI was reportedly far less militant than its Chicago counterpart. See Erdmann Doane Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology*, 43 (May 1938): 905-906.
- 45 See Jill Watts, *God, Harlem U.S.A.: The Father Divine Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Marcus Garvey, too, had internalized certain aspects of New Thought. See Robert A. Hill and Barbara Bair, ed., *Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), xxviii-xxix.
- 46 See, for example, Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult," 900-901.
- 47 See, for example, Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple No. 2, 1965); *The Fall of America* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple No. 2, 1973); *Our Saviour Has Arrived* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple No. 2, 1974); *The Theology of Time* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communications Systems, 1992).
- 48 In May 1942 Muhammad was arrested in Washington, D.C. for failure to register for the draft. Out on bail, he returned to Chicago where he was re-arrested

- ed the following September on additional violations of the Selective Service and Training Act, including that of sedition. In late November he was convicted and sent to prison on the initial charge; having achieved the goal of wartime incarceration, authorities then dropped the second set of indictments. Memorandum from SAC, Detroit to Director, FBI, August 9, 1957, FBI file 105-24822-25; Ernest Allen, Jr., "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races': Satokata Takahashi and the Flowering of Black Messianic Nationalism," *The Black Scholar* 24 (Winter 1994): 23. All FBI records cited in the present study were secured under the Freedom of Information Act.
- 49 The most complete source on Muhammad's life and thought is Claude A. Clegg, III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, forthcoming February 1997). See the present issue for a reprint of his fifth chapter, entitled "Rebuilding the Nation: The Life and Work of Elijah Muhammad, 1946-1954."
- 50 Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult," 897; Sahib, "The Nation of Islam," 99, 108; *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine, 1973), 219.
- 51 Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 290; Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Transition from Separatism to Islam, 1930-1980* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 72.
- 52 Throughout the 1950s the respective leadership skills of Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad fairly complemented one another. But most African Americans remained unaware of Messenger Muhammad's deeper wisdom until Malcolm X had endlessly extolled his leader's virtues in public.
- 53 *Pittsburgh Courier* (April 14, 1956): 3 [mag. sect.]; Report of [agent name deleted], December 27, 1956, FBI file 105-24822-13, p. 30; *Pittsburgh Courier* (February 22, 1958): 8; and (March 15, 1958): 5 [mag. sect.]. Malcolm X noted a "sharp climb" in the number of Muslim-owned small businesses by 1961, but did not distinguish between privately and organizationally owned enterprises. Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 263.
- 54 Sahib, "The Nation of Islam," 84.
- 55 However, the second openly advertised convention in February 1958 was publicized as the "ninth," which would date the very first (but apparently closed) convention meeting back to 1950. *Pittsburgh Courier* (March 8, 1958): 4-5 [mag. sect.].
- 56 Coincidentally, the emphasis on self-defense occurred during a period when armed, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggles on the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America were in the ascendancy, a situation which led many African Americans — above all, Malcolm X — to blur the notion of armed self-defense with that of violent political revolution.
- 57 Elijah Muhammad's early writings spoke of a "return" to the East and to "best lands," which originally meant the Nile Valley as well as Mecca; later he called for a physical "return" of Black Americans to Africa in the vaguest of terms, allowing that if the U.S. government would not pay for their transport, that it should set aside a separate territory in the southern states for black settlement. Neither choice proved viable. But Garvey at least purchased steamships, only one of which may have been suitable for transatlantic travel; there exists no concrete evidence of emigrationist plans on the NOI's part, however. Privately, Elijah Muhammad admitted as such. See Louis E. Lomax, *When the Word Is Given* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1963), 79.
- 58 *Pittsburgh Courier* (January 17, 1959): 8. In a message to the African-Asian Conference meeting in Cairo the previous year, Mr. Muhammad proclaimed himself the "Leader, Teacher and Spiritual Head of the Nation of Islam in the West." *Pittsburgh Courier* (January 18, 1958): 5.
- 59 Some of these challenges came in the form of ad hominem attacks; see, for example, *New Crusader* (August 15, 1959): 1. See also Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 80 n45, 311-17; and C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, rvsd. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 184.
- 60 Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 275; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 246.
- 61 Information in this section concerning Diab and Muhammad, as well as the latter's Middle East tour, is based on an account given by Warith Deen Mohammed, "Race Relations in America: An Islamic Perspective," videotaped speech delivered at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, November 16, 1993. Despite such negative impressions, after returning to the U.S. Elijah Muhammad subsequently referred to NOI temples as "mosques." Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 263.
- 62 On the other hand, the NOI continued to observe Ramadan in December instead of March (undoubtedly for the purpose of challenging the pervasive influence of Christmas); the form of prayer taught by Master Fard — a slight cupping of the hands with palms facing upward — was unknown to the international Muslim community; nor was the practice of *jumah* observed. What also remained were Fard's basic teachings concerning the nature of God and Spirit, polygenesis, and a fundamental disregard for the prophet Muhammad. As a result, Sheikh Diab ultimately and bitterly dissassociated himself from the NOI. See Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 183-84. For a brief description of pre-1978 NOI prayer rituals, see also Lasiné Kaba, "Americans Discover Islam through the Black Muslim Experience," in *Islam in North America: A Sourcebook*, ed. Michael A. Köszegi and J. Gordon Melton (New York: Garland, 1992), 32.
- 63 These articles were subsequently reproduced in the form of topical fragments in two volumes known as *The Supreme Wisdom*, published in the latter 1950s, and wholly in *Message to the Blackman in America* and other works.
- 64 Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims*, 73; Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 249-50.

- 65 *Pittsburgh Courier* (March 8, 1958): 7; (July 19, 1958): 8. In a repeat of this pattern, in late 1972 Elijah Muhammad requested a meeting of five hundred New York black business and professional leaders to discuss the expansion of NOI activities. Anticipating a genuine dialogue, several participants expressed disappointment at having been lectured to by Mr. Muhammad as if they had no ideas themselves to contribute. *New York Times* (October 2, 1972): 24.
- 66 For insights into the running of the newspaper, see John Woodford, "Testing America's Promise of Free Speech: *Muhammad Speaks* in the 1960s, A Memoir," *Voices of the African Diaspora* [CAAS, University of Michigan] 7 (Fall 1991): 3-16; rpt. as "Messaging the Blackman," in *Voices from the Underground*, 2 vols., ed. Ken Wachsberger (Tempe, AZ: Mica Press, 1993), 1:81-98, *Relocations of the Spirit* (Wakefield, RI and London: Asphodel Press, 1994), 66-116. In the early 1960s assessments of the Nation of Islam by the Communist Party U.S.A.'s black leadership were divided. Based in Chicago where the party had established a rapport with the NOI, Claude Lightfoot was generally supportive; in New York City where it had not, James E. Jackson was highly critical. See Claude Lightfoot, "Negro Nationalism and the Black Muslims," *Political Affairs* 41 (July 1962): 3-20; and James E. Jackson, "A Fighting People Forging Unity," *Political Affairs* 42 (August 1963): 41-46.
- 67 The success of these early recruitment efforts is noted by Malcolm X in his *Autobiography*, 262; see also Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims*, 73. The growing inclination on the part of the NOI to recruit more of its members from the middle class also may have had to do with cultivating a wealthier constituency from whom more substantial revenues could be tithed. In his "The Rise of Louis Farrakhan," *The Nation* (January 21, 1991): 54, Adolph Reed, Jr. has noted a connection between the NOI's middle-class recruitment and its drive for economic growth in the early 1970s.
- 68 For a discussion of the OAAU's significance, see William W. Sales, Jr., *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston: South End Press, 1994).
- 69 Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 289.
- 70 Lawrence Mamiya has advanced a convenient paradigm to characterize the difference between Louis Farrakhan and W. Deen Mohammed as that of a pre-hajj "Old Malcolm" to that of a post-hajj "New Malcolm." This framework holds true, however, only if one limits oneself to the domains of religion and racial nationalism. See Lawrence H. Mamiya, "Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Final Call: Schism in the Muslim Movement," in *The Muslim Community in North America*, ed. Earle H. Waugh Baha Abu-Laban and Regula B. Qureshi (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 234.
- 71 *Pittsburgh Courier* (February 28, 1959): 4-5 [mag. sect.].
- 72 *Chicago Tribune* (March 12, 1995): 16.
- 73 *Newsweek* (March 15, 1976): 33.
- 74 *Chicago Tribune* (March 1, 1976): 1; (March 12, 1995): 16; *New York Times* (December 6, 1973): 37; (February 26, 1976): 14; Bruce Michael Gans and Walter L. Lowe, "The Islam Connection," *Playboy Magazine* (May 1980): 130. In a *Muhammad Speaks* interview c. December 1973, and at a press conference as well, Minister Farrakhan steadfastly denied that Muslims had engaged in crime in order to bolster sagging NOI revenues. A reprint of the interview can be found in *7 Speeches by Minister Louis Farrakhan* (Newport News, VA: Ramza Associates & United Brothers Communications Systems, 1974), 43-64; see also *New York Times* (December 11, 1973): 74. More recently an internal FBI report transmitted surreptitiously to the Anti-Defamation League's domestic intelligence operation claimed — perhaps deceptively — that high-ranking members of the present-day NOI had engaged in white-collar crime for the purpose of improving the group's cash-flow. Specifically mentioned were instances of federal tax violations, credit-card fraud, and bank-loan scams, the last-mentioned being an offence for which former NOI minister Khallid Abdul Muhammad actually served prison time. Equally troubling was the inference that that 41 members of the New Orleans-branch NOI had offered cash and other items to food-stamp recipients in exchange for their stamps, which would then be redeemed at a substantial profit from local banks. "San Francisco Police Affidavit in Support of Search Warrant for A.D.L. Offices," April 1993. See also Robert I. Friedman, "The Enemy Within," *Village Voice* (May 11, 1993): 27 ff.
- 75 See Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims*, 74. National Secretary John Ali appears to have played an advisory role with respect to this privileged inner circle. In his *When the Word Is Given*, 82, journalist Louis Lomax identifies John [X] Ali as a former FBI agent.
- 76 *Chicago Tribune* (January 14, 1972): 2, sect. 1D. Perhaps to silence anticipated criticisms of this ostentatious measure, Elijah Muhammad simultaneously announced plans for the construction in Chicago of 100 single-family, low-income homes financed by the NOI. The latter project does not seem to have materialized, however. *Chicago Tribune* (January 15, 1972): 1.
- 77 *Chicago Tribune* (January 13, 1972): 2, sect. 1D; (January 14, 1972): 2, sect. 1D.
- 78 [*New Orleans*] *Times-Picayune* (January 11, 1972): 1, 2; (January 12, 1972): 1, 2; (January 13, 1972): 2, 3; *Chicago Tribune* (January 14, 1972): 18; (January 15, 1972): 1; (May 1, 1973): 1, 3; *New York Times* (January 21, 1972): 1, 21; (May 1, 1973): 35; (April 1, 1975): 25. Nine Muslims were eventually found guilty of murder, but the convictions were overturned on a technicality.
- 79 Nor was the NOI image helped by the fact that African Americans affiliated with Dar Ul Islam, a traditional Islamic organization based in Brooklyn, were also involved in a deadly gun battle in early 1974; to the general public, to be black and Muslim was to be a "Black Muslim," or NOI adherent. See

- New York Times* (February 6, 1974): 44.
- 80 Its leader, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis, had recently sent a second series of letters to ministers of NOI mosques urging them to reject the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. *New York Times* (January 19, 1973): 1, 13; (January 31, 1973): 10.
- 81 *New York Times* (May 3, 1973): 26. Authorities claimed that Shabazz was killed because he taught that Elijah Muhammad was the messenger of Allah, contradicting the dissident group's belief that he was Allah in person. *New York Times* (September 5, 1973): 50; (May 3, 1974): 3.
- 82 See Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "W. D. Muhammad: The Making of a 'Black Muslim' Leader (1933-1961)," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 2.2 (1985): 245-62; C. Eric Lincoln, "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History," in *The Muslim Community in North America*, 215-33; Lawrence H. Mamiya, "From Black Muslim to Bilalian: The Evolution of a Movement," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982): 138-52; and especially Lee, *The Nation of Islam*, 98, 101.
- 83 *Time* (June 30, 1975): 52; *New York Times* (June 17, 1975): 9; (February 26, 1976): 14; *Chicago Tribune* (March 1, 1976): 1; (February 19, 1976): 1, sect. 2; (March 1, 1976): 1; *New York Times* (March 7, 1978): 18.
- 84 *Time* (March 14, 1977): 59.
- 85 *Muslim Journal* (January 10, 1986): 2; (February 11, 1986): 2; (March 21, 1986): 8 [WNE sect.].
- 86 It was also the intention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to generate "factionalism among the contenders for Elijah Muhammad's leadership or through legal action in probate court on his death." See excerpts from FBI memorandum in *Muslim Journal* (April 4, 1986): 4.
- 87 Fourteen of the children were conceived outside of his marriage to Clara Muhammad. Devotees continue to represent Mr. Muhammad's acts as having fulfilled a prophetic role, and the secretaries with whom he had entered into carnal relations as his "wives." Others point out that, under the NOI code of conduct, lesser ranking members had been suspended from the organization for engaging in similar activities. True, Elijah Muhammad himself called the Bible a "poison book" for its having overtly depicted the moral lapses of prophetic figures, but whether he considered the "poison" to be in the doing or the telling is a matter of conjecture.
- 88 *Chicago Tribune* (July 11, 1986): 1-2. The fact that the NOI had deposited approximately \$20 million in a Japanese bank is of more than passing interest. In the early 1960s Japanese businessman Seiho Tajiri "arranged for a major Japanese food company to provide for the fish sold in the Nation of Islam's shops and restaurants." But Elijah Muhammad's pro-Nippon leanings can be traced back thirty years previous. See Frank McCoy, "Black Business Courts the Japanese Market," *Black Enterprise* (June 1994): 216; and Allen, "When Japan Was Champion," 25, 32.
- 89 *Newsweek* (March 15, 1976): 33. See also *New York Times* (August 8, 1976): 34.
- 90 *Chicago Tribune* (September 13, 1978): 1, sect. 3. In later years Muhammad would interpret the *zakat*, or tithe, as a *responsibility* to engage in commerce: "business is a religious obligation. It is a religious obligation for Muslims." *Muslim Journal* (February 7, 1986): 2.
- 91 Even as Wallace Muhammad announced the existence of \$900,000 in short-term and \$4.5 million in long-term debt some two years earlier, the NOI continued to purchase Chicago properties. *Chicago Tribune* (March 1, 1976): 1.
- 92 *Chicago Tribune* (January 7, 1979): 6; *Black Enterprise* (March 1981): 20; *Muslim Journal* (April 18, 1986): 7; Lincoln, "American Muslim Mission," 229.
- 93 *New York Times* (February 26, 1976): 14. *Bilalian News* subsequently became the *American Muslim Journal*, and then simply the *Muslim Journal*.
- 94 *New York Times* (October 19, 1976): 33. For a discussion of *ummah* and *'asabiya* see McCloud, *African American Islam*, 4-5.
- 95 *Chicago Tribune* (May 3, 1985): 1, 24.
- 96 *New York Times* (May 25, 1978): 20; James Emerson Whitehurst, "The Mainstreaming of Black Muslims: Healing the Hate," *Christian Century* (February 27, 1980): 229.
- 97 *Muslim Journal* (February 21, 1986): 2.
- 98 *New York Times* (May 3, 1993): B7.
- 99 *Muslim Journal* (March 17, 1995): 15.
- 100 *Muslim Journal* (April 18, 1986): 6. This number is to be distinguished from weekly attendance figures at "affiliated" mosques during the same period, which has been reported in the hundreds of thousands.
- 101 *Time* (March 14, 1977): 59.
- 102 *New York Times* (February 26, 1976): 14.
- 103 *Chicago Tribune* (January 7, 1979): 6.
- 104 *Chicago Tribune* (September 13, 1978): 1, sect. 3; *Christianity Today* 23 (October 6, 1978): 45.
- 105 "BBB Interviews Minister Abdul Farrakhan," *Black Books Bulletin* 6 (Spring 1978): 45, 71; Gardell, "The Sun of Islam Will Rise," 25. See also Mamiya, "Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Final Call," 234-53; and Jabril Muhammad, *This Is the One: The Most Honored Elijah Muhammad, We Need Not Look for Another!*, rvsd. ed. (Phoenix, AZ: Book Company, 1993), 154.
- 106 Black, "Farrakhan and the Jews," 6. See also Madhubuti's instructive account, "The Farrakhan Factor," regarding Farrakhan's use of Chicago-based nationalists to build his initial following. Haki R. Madhubuti, *Claiming Earth: Race, Rage, Rape, Redemption: Blacks Seeking A Culture of Enlightened Empowerment* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1994), 71-98.
- 107 *Time* (February 28, 1994): 26.

- 108 See *Chicago Tribune* (March 12, 1995): 1 ff. Minister Farrakhan's fiery riposte to the *Tribune's* series of sensationalist exposés of his operations failed to dislodge the claim that many NOI-affiliated firms were privately owned.
- 109 There was by now, of course, the promise (or threat) of an African American domestic homeland advanced by ultra-right wing paramilitary groups such as Posse Comitatus and Aryan Nation, who evinced a desire to partition the United States into racial enclaves. To be sure, such plans smacked more of a Bantustan or concentration-camp governance than of genuine autonomy; and Farrakhan, despite his apparent ties to such groups, has declined to endorse such plans publicly. See *Washington Times* (November 5, 1985): 7.
- 110 *Back Where We Belong: Selected Speeches by Minister Louis Farrakhan*, ed. Joseph D. Eure and Richard M. Jerome (Philadelphia: PC International Press, 1989), 154-56. Here Farrakhan confesses publicly what Elijah Muhammad earlier admitted in private.
- 111 See, for example, Sigmund Shipp, "The Road Not Taken: Alternative Strategies For Black Economic Development in the United States," *Journal of Economic Issues* 30 (March 1996): 79-95. During the Reagan years, black petit-bourgeois elements evolved another strategy to replace the traditional "ghetto nationalism" of earlier epochs: corporate interventionism. Farrakhan has not followed their lead. For a dissection of this particular tack, see Earl Picard, "The New Black Economic Development Strategy," *Telos* 60 (Summer 1984): 53-64.
- 112 *Time* (February 28, 1994): 26.
- 113 When Farrakhan was still minister of the Harlem mosque in the 1970s, he oversaw operations of the Fish Force, a NOI fish-import business. For an account of the latter's business activities see Playthell Benjamin, "The Attitude Is the Message," *Village Voice* (August 15, 1989): 25, 27.
- 114 The situation was roughly analagous to that which Marcus Garvey faced in 1922, in the wake of the post-World War I recession. Several years earlier the UNIA had been awash in self-sufficient funds garnered from a black working-class constituency; in the face of massive employment losses occasioned by the recession, Garvey produced a pamphlet entitled "Appeal to the Soul of White America," requesting monies from whites to support his program of African expatriation. Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions* 2: 1-6.
- 115 "The Muslims to the Rescue," *Ebony* (August 1989): 136, 138, 140; *Los Angeles Times* (July 2, 1992): B1, 3; (November 2, 1992): B1; (December 27, 1992): B1, 6; *U.S. News and World Report* (September 12, 1994): 40, 42-43; *New York Times* (March 4, 1994): 1, 18; *Chicago Tribune* (March 12, 1995): 1, 16-17; (March 13, 1995): 1, 10. Success has also been forthcoming to the NOI in obtaining government contracts to treat AIDS patients at its Washington, D.C. clinic, but the victory was also marred by controversy. The clinic's director, Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, initially claimed that interferon therapies had "cured" significant numbers of people afflicted with AIDS. Following an outcry from the scientific community, he subsequently scaled back this claim to the more credible assertion that interferon helped AIDS patients gain weight. There were also complaints from the black gay community, some members of which claimed that turning AIDS medical testing over to the anti-homosexual NOI was akin to turning the fabled black scientist Yakub loose in a nursery! *Washington Post* (July 29, 1993): 25; (September 29, 1993): D1, 5; *New York Times* (March 4, 1994): 10; *Final Call* (October 6, 1994): 7; *Chicago Tribune* (March 14, 1995): 1, 10.
- 116 Benjamin, "The Attitude Is the Message," 25.
- 117 *New York Times* (March 1, 1995): C1, 10.
- 118 *Business Week* (March 13, 1995): 40.
- 119 A more recent report on NOI economic activities paints an even bleaker picture. See *Washington Post*, national weekly edition (September 9-15, 1996): 6-11.
- 120 Cited in *New York Times* (June 17, 1975): 9.
- 121 Louis Farrakhan, *The Announcement: A Final Warning to the U.S. Government* (Chicago: FCN, 1989). W. Deen Mohammed, one notes, has never reported experiencing a similar vision. However, Abass Ras-soull of the UNOI claims to have been recently informed by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad *in person* that "Minister Farrakhan had been properly relieved of the post of sitting in The Messenger's chair on September 30, 1989."
- 122 *Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1966* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967); Stone, "Estimate of Muslims," 25-36.
- 123 Gardell, "The Sun of Islam Will Rise," 32.
- 124 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 125 This liberalizing tendency already had begun under Elijah Muhammad around the 1972-1973 period. In its stead arose the demonizing of Jews. See George E. Curry, "Farrakhan, Jesse & Jews," *Emerge* (July/August 1994): 34-35.
- 126 See, for example, Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, 173, 316.
- 127 For Farrakhan's views on the efficacy of politics, see "Farrakhan: Some Straight Talk and a Few Tears for Malcolm from the Minister," interview by George E. Curry, *Emerge* (August 1990): 34. Reflecting the implicit assumption that blacks are indeed Americans, Farrakhan claimed in a recent work that "Over 30 million Americans live in poverty, and 10 million of those are black." Louis Farrakhan, *A Torchlight for America* (Chicago: FCN, 1993), 15. Where Elijah Muhammad had outright denied the existence of an American identity for blacks, Louis Farrakhan now implicitly assumes its existence. The NOI's initial venture into establishment politics occurred with its support of the Jackson presidential campaign in 1984. Six years later, rather than throw its weight behind individual

black politicians over whom it exercised no real control, the NOI decided to run its own candidates directly. Entering the Democratic primary race in Maryland's 5th District, Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad sought to unseat a well-heeled U.S. Congressman seeking a fifth term. Outspent in the campaign by a factor of ten-to-one, Muhammad received only 21% of the vote, thus once again putting on temporary hold direct NOI participation in electoral politics. Capturing the NOI's attention was the fact that the black population of Prince George's county, the greater portion of which was located within the 5th District, had grown to 50% of the total, thus offering the possibility of a successful run for office based upon a direct nationalist appeal. The assumption proved incorrect. During the same period, NOI members Shawn X. Brakeen sought a school board post, and George X. Cure a delegate's seat, in the District of Columbia. *Washington Post* (August 2, 1990): D2; (September 12, 1990): A21.

- 128 For perceptive views on the power struggle within the Nation of Islam, see Peter Noel, "To Kill A Brother Minister: Khallid Muhammad Versus the Nation of Islam," *Village Voice* (August 2, 1994): 21 ff.; Noel, "The Final Call," 23 ff.; and Sylvester Munroe, "Khallid Abdul Muhammad," *Emerge* (September 1994): 40-46. Both authors have no trouble in identifying Khallid Muhammad's constituency outside the NOI, but his specific base — if any — within the organization remains unclear.
- 129 Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, 2: 133. That is not to say that many of Garvey's enemies were not also motivated by petty jealousies or strong pro-government bias as well.
- 130 The saga began after presidential candidate Jesse Jackson was accused of uttering a slur against Jews. See Curry, "Farrakhan, Jesse & Jews," 30.
- 131 Cited in Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 176.
- 132 *Thunderbolt* 309 (n.d., c. 1985): 5.
- 133 For examples of deliberate distortions of Farrakhan's remarks, see Curry, "Farrakhan, Jesse & Jews," 37, 40.
- 134 By 1985 a symbiotic relationship of sorts appeared to develop between Farrakhan and his right-wing, nationalist counterparts within the American Jewish community. First, Farrakhan would utter an outrageous remark concerning Jews, for which Jewish organizations would then expend tens of thousands of dollars denouncing him in full-page newspaper ads. This free publicity only further endeared Louis Farrakhan to black communities coast to coast, increased NOI membership, and, for better or for worse, made Farrakhan's name a household word. Such negative publicity also attracted the attention of "checkbook Zionists" (as they are known within the Jewish community), who would then proceed to pour hundreds of thousands of dollars into Jewish protective organizations. These groups would subsequently demand that prominent blacks denounce Minister Far-

rakhan for his verbal transgressions. Then began the next round of a ritual of which a good many African Americans have grown weary. To paraphrase an ancient African proverb: "When two right-wing zealotries clash, only rational people get trampled."

- 135 Benjamin, "The Attitude Is the Message," 24.
- 136 See Ernest Allen Jr., "Toward A 'More Perfect Union': A Commingling of Constitutional Ideals and Christian Precepts," *Black Scholar* 25 (Fall 1995): 27-34.
- 137 Louis Farrakhan, "Why A Million Man March?," *Final Call* (August 30, 1995): 19.
- 138 George E. Curry, "After the Million Man March," *Emerge* (February 1996): 48. An exception to the meager availability of information on the LOCs was the October 22, 1996 *Final Call*, celebrating the first anniversary of the Million Man March.
- 139 *New York Times* (March 25, 1996): A1, 12.
- 140 [*Springfield*] *Sunday Republican* (June 30, 1966): A1, 13, 18; *The Spirit* [Official Newsletter of the Springfield Chapter of the Million Man March Committee] 1 (October 16, 1996).
- 141 *Final Call* (January 31, 1996): 3.
- 142 Louis Farrakhan, "Can the U.N. Avert the War of Armageddon?," *Final Call* (November 5, 1996): 21.
- 143 Divided reactions to march follow-up activities are reflected in interviews conducted by Darrell Dawsey, "In Their Footsteps," *Emerge* (October 1996): 46-49.
- 144 Beynon, "The Voodoo Cult," 906.
- 145 See Mamiya, "Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Final Call," 245-51 esp.

