

Nation of Islam

أمة الإسلام

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Many of us have heard the term ‘Nation of Islam’, and may think that it is merely a different way of expressing the phrase Ummah of Muhammad, meaning those who follow the teachings of Muhammad, may God praise him. Still others may associate the words Nation of Islam with African Americans. Perhaps it seems obvious that ‘Nation of Islam’ is referring to African American Muslims, however a little bit of research proves this to be wrong. Although this group does on occasion align itself with the religion of Islam at times, the belief system is vastly different and in fact goes completely against the tenants of Islam. The first pillar of Islam, the foundational belief, is, *there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His final messenger*.

In the late 1920’s a man appeared on the streets of Detroit, USA selling African silks and artefacts door to door. The name he was using at the time was Wallace Fard Muhammad. His origins, ancestry and ethnicity were, and still are, open to debate. However one thing is definitely true, his charismatic personality allowed him to convince many members of the African American community to join his newly founded religion, ‘Nation of Islam’. In 1930 he opened the first NOI temple. Wallace Fard taught “freedom, justice, and equality to the members of the lost tribe of

Shabazz in the wilderness of North America”. He taught the poor African Americans that they were somebody “with a past, a future, a history and a destiny”. Within three years he had converted nearly 8000 followers.¹

One of W Fard Muhammad’s most devoted followers was Elijah Poole, an unemployed auto mechanic from Georgia. He changed his name to Elijah Muhammad and soon became Fard’s Chief Minister. In the summer of 1934, Fard suddenly disappeared as mysteriously as he had arrived. Elijah Muhammad was named the new leader and assumed the title of "Messenger of Allah." Bearing in mind that such a title is a great blasphemy and coupled with the following statement from Elijah Muhammad’s book, Message to the Blackman, we can see that from the very beginning NOI has no connection to the religion of Islam. Not even to the extent of being called either an off shoot or a cult.

“Allah (God) came to us from the Holy City Mecca, Arabia, in 1930. He used the name Wallace D. Fard, often signing it W. D. Fard. In the third year (1933), He signed His name W. F. Muhammad, which stands for Wallace Fard Muhammad. He came alone. He began teaching us the knowledge of ourselves, of God and the devil, of the measurement of the earth, of other planets, and of the civilizations of some of the planets other than earth.”²

Islam says categorically and without reservation that there is no god but Allah. He has no partners, associates, sons or daughters. God does not take on human form and to even suggest such a possibility is a major sin and deviation from the teachings of Islam.

1 Gnosis Magazine, p. 59. & Lincoln, The Black Church Since Frazier, (New York: Schocken Books, 1989) p. 163. Both cited in the article The Nation of Islam and archived at

<http://www.watchman.org/profile/nationofislampro.htm>

2 Message to the Blackman, Elijah Muhammad. Chapter 8, paragraph 5.

The single most important convert to NOI is Malcolm Little, who converted to Nation of Islam in a Concord, Massachusetts prison in 1947. Malcolm Little is now better known to the world as Malcolm X. While Malcolm was in prison Elijah Muhammad was preaching that white society actively worked to keep African-Americans from empowering themselves and achieving political, economic and social success. NOI also called for a state of their own, uninhabited by white people. When he was paroled in 1952, Malcolm was a devoted follower with the new surname X. (Little was a slave name and Malcolm chose "X" to signify his lost tribal name.)

Malcolm was both intelligent and articulate, and soon became the national spokesperson for NOI. He established new mosques (temples) and utilised all fields of media available at the time to spread the NOI message across the United States. He is credited with increasing membership from 500 in 1952 to more than 30 thousand by 1963. During this time Malcolm preached that black people were genetically superior to white people but were dominated by a system of white supremacy.

“Anyone who has studied the genetic phase of biology knows that white is considered recessive and black is considered dominant. The entire American economy is based on white supremacy. Even the religious philosophies, in essence, white supremacy. A white Jesus. A white Virgin. White angels. White everything. But a black Devil, of course. The "Uncle Sam" political foundation is based on white supremacy, relegating nonwhites to second-class citizenship. It goes without saying that the social philosophy is strictly white supremacist. And the educational system perpetuates white supremacy.”³

As the years passed, through the grace of God, Malcolm X moved closer to the real Islam. He was well read and travelled extensively. In early 1964 Malcolm publicly declared his

3 Alex Haley, "The Playboy Interview: Malcolm X", Playboy Magazine, May 1963

separation from NOI, stating irreconcilable differences and growing tensions between himself and Elijah Muhammad. In the same year he participated in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Malcolm was overwhelmed by the universal brotherhood he experienced on Hajj and returned to the US, a Sunni Muslim determined to preach his message to all races. Malcolm X was assassinated - gunned down at the Audoban Ballroom in Harlem, New York, on February 21, 1965.

Elijah Muhammad continued to lead NOI until his death from congestive heart failure on February 25, 1975. His son, Warith Deen Muhammad became the new leader of the NOI. Because of his knowledge of Islam he began to make changes, the most dramatic being the merger of his followers into traditional or Sunni Islam.

“I have been trying to bring what used to be called the Nation of Islam to what I call a natural and normal Islamic community. The idea we have had of a community is not Islamic and came from the days of Black Nationalism.”⁴

Many of Elijah Muhammad's former followers were pleased with Wallace's new direction, however many were not. In 1979, the disenchanted faction, led by Louis Farrakhan, split from Wallace's new American Muslim Mission that now allowed white members. Farrakhan's group adhered to the original teachings of black supremacy and once again called themselves NOI.

The Watchman Expositor⁵ an independent Christian research and apologetics ministry founded in 1979 states that, “Although Farrakhan's organization claims to be the authentic Nation of Islam, there are three other organizations making this same claim. John Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad's blood brother, heads one, based in Detroit. A second organization is based in Atlanta and

4 The Atlanta Journal Constitution, May 4, 1985, p. 3C.

5(<http://www.watchman.org/profile/nationofislampro.htm>)

headed by Silas Muhammad. Emanuel Abdulla Muhammad established a third organization in Baltimore. The most recognized of the four organizations is that founded by Louis Farrakhan.”

In part 2 we will delve deeper into the world of NOI and discover that they may actually have more in common with Scientology than Islam and spend some time comparing tenants of faith.

Reminder: Nation of Islam (NOI) definition ~ A religious and cultural organization founded in 1930 in the United States, espousing Islamic principles and favouring political, social, and economic independence for African Americans. ⁶

Espouse ~ to adopt, advocate, support. ⁷

Loius Farrakhan, the leader of the most accepted group calling itself ‘Nation of Islam’, was born Louis Eugene Walcott in May 1933 in New York City. He was recruited by Malcolm X and quickly progressed through the ranks of NOI. After the death of Malcolm X, he became Elijah Muhammad's national spokesman. Farrakhan led the group that refused to follow Elijah Muhammad’s son Warith Deen into traditional Islam.

The Nation of Islam (The Nation of Peace) represents hope to millions of our people in America and around the globe who have been deprived of the high standards of a righteous way of life. These words are taken from the NOI website and indicate that NOI, like Islam, stress the importance of morality and modesty, mutual respect, and discipline in dress and comportment. Members of NOI read Quran and profess to believe in One God whom they refer to, like Muslims, as Allah. However, this is

6 (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Nation+of+Islam>)

7 (thesaurus.com/browse/espouse)

where the similarities end. As previously mentioned, the first pillar of Islam, the absolute foundation of belief, is the testimony of faith. There is no god worthy of worship but Allah and Muhammad is His slave and final messenger.

The greatest sin in Islam is to commit shirk. That is to associate anything or anyone with God. As stressed over and over in the Quran and in the authentic teachings of Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him, there is only One God. He has no partners, no sons or daughters and there is nothing like him. One aspect of Shirk is to give God the form or qualities of a human being. Islam states that God is separate and distinct from His creation and that He never did nor will become human. The fact that NOI considers Wallace Fard (Muhammad) to have been God incarnate immediately calls into question their beliefs and their implied association with Islam.

When Elijah Muhammad aka Elijah Poole assumed leadership of the NOI he took the title Messenger of Allah. Throughout Islamic doctrine it is clearly stated that Muhammad is the last prophet of God.

“...he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets...”
(Quran 33:40)

One of the NOI doctrines states - There is no God but Allah Who appeared in the Person of Master W.D. Fard Muhammad our Saviour, Messiah and Great Mahdi. We forever thank Him for giving to us His Divine Messenger the Last and Greatest Messenger of Allah to the world in the Person of the Most Honourable Elijah Muhammad.

Although NOI shares many things in common with Islam, particularly the call for righteous behaviour and including prayers five times per day there are so many deviations that it cannot be included under the umbrella of Islamic sects, off shoots or schools of thought. Islam states categorically that all human beings are

created equal despite race or ethnicity, NOI however, preaches black supremacy. NOI doctrine teaches that the black man is the original human, from him came other races, brown, yellow and red and the white man is the creation of a black scientist named Yacub,(Prophet Jacob). Islam however has another explanation.

God created Adam from a handful of soil containing portions from all its varieties on Earth. Angels were sent to earth to collect the soil that was to become Adam. It was red, white, brown, and black; it was soft and malleable, hard and gritty; it came from the mountains and the valleys; from infertile deserts and lush fertile plains and all the natural varieties in between. The descendants of Adam were destined to be as diverse as the handful of soil from which their ancestor was created; all have different appearances, attributes and qualities.⁸

Other NOI teachings include Elijah Muhammad's account of the visions of the Prophet Ezekiel in the Bible. He considers it to be a Mother Plane or Wheel, a UFO. This seems to suggest that NOI may have more in common with Scientology⁹ than Islam. The Scientology creation story began 75 million years ago in a far off corner of the galaxy, with an evil warlord and bombs exploding on isolated islands across the globe. NOI has its own intergalactic connection.

Amongst the teachings of Farrakhan we find the following intergalactic story, complete with an island and three bombs. "The Honourable Elijah Muhammad told us of a giant Mother Plane that is made like the universe, spheres within spheres. White people call them unidentified flying objects (UFOs). Ezekiel, in the Old Testament, saw a wheel that looked like a cloud by day but a pillar of fire by night. The Honourable Elijah Muhammad said that that

8 (<http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/1190/>)

9 For more information please see

(<http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/4561/>)

wheel was built on the island of Nippon, which is now called Japan, by some of the Original scientists. It took \$15 billion in gold at that time to build it. It is made of the toughest steel. He said there are 1,500 small wheels in this Mother Wheel, which is a half mile by a half mile [800 m by 800 m]. This Mother Wheel is like a small human-built planet. Each one of these small planes carries three bombs.¹⁰

In the past few years Farrakhan has begun using the scientology terms such as engram, charge, org board, management technology, and valuable final product. Obvious ties between black communities, particularly Farrakhan's NOI, and Scientology began as early as 2006. That year at scientology's annual Ebony Awards, Farrakhan was among four black clergymen to be honoured. NOI's western regional Minister Tony Muhammad was quoted as saying he was happy to be partnering with Scientology and disclosed a plan to train members of NOI to administer Hubbard's "study tech" and drug treatment methods.

In February 2011 Farrakhan spoke to a packed house at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont as part of the 81st annual celebration of Saviours' Day. His speech capped a weekend of workshops focused on health, preparing for natural disasters and unidentified flying objects.¹¹ Farrakhan spoke for four hours, during which he described his 1985 religious experience in which he ascended into a flying saucer and heard the voice of Elijah Muhammad predicting events that came to pass. Farrakhan praised Scientology and its founder, L. Ron Hubbard and extolled the virtues of its auditing process.

In contrast to all of this, Islam is a simple religion. It calls on human beings to worship their Creator in the manner in which He

10 Minister Louis Farrakhan, *The Divine Destruction of America: Can She Avert It?*

11 (http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-02-27/news/ct-met-farrakhan-20110227_1_nation-of-islam-leader-saviours-day-fard-muhammad)

prescribed. It is unencumbered by science fiction and racism. In God's eyes all men are equal regardless of colour or ethnicity. They are distinguished from each other only by piety and good deeds. Commendably NOI has taken the morality and manners of Islam but as long as they are unable to profess the testimony of faith ~ there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His slave and final messenger ~ they are not able to claim the title Muslim. ¹²

12 For more information about NOI and its off shoots, such as the Five Percenters please see:

(<http://islamnewsroom.com/news-we-need/1101-nation-of-islam-are-they-real-muslims>)