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# I was Born for the Mission

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

First Official Interview

Editor's note: The following interview was conducted for Bilalian News newspaper and the general press by Herbert Muhammad, brother of the Chief Minister of the Nation of Islam, the Honorable Wallace D. Mohammed.

**B.N**.: What is the significance of the physical death of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad? Will this create a split in the Nation?

**Chief Min**.: To answer the first part of the question would take a sermon because the significance of my father's physical death is tied up or revealed in the scriptures. But for us, the real significance here is not the physical death, but a transition that is brought about by the physical death.

As to the second part of the question, the answer is just 'no'. Simply no.

**B.N**.: Why did your father never teach the Muslims concerning his passing, nor openly tell them that they are to look to his family for spiritual direction, and to you especially?

**Chief Min**.: To the first part of the question, the answer is this: The Honorable Elijah Muhammad was a wise leader. And a wise leader does not make death a question in the minds of the people, or put this question constantly on the minds of the people. He did, however, mention his passing, but as hints to the wise. He also said that he would not die, that he would live and be with his G-d in the end.

To understand this answer, we have to refer to the Holy Qur'an where it says: "Speak not of My servants as dead. They are alive. They are alive but you perceive not."

The second part of the question shows an un-awareness of what the Honorable Elijah Muhammad taught his family as to their significance and responsibilities, and for what kind of leadership the general body of Muslim followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad expected and looked up to them.

I, myself, have heard him mention many times the spiritual worth and duties of all those who are from his loins and remind each and everyone of us of our responsibilities as such.

**B.N**.: Why were you chosen to succeed your father, rather than one of the elder brothers?

**Chief Min**.: My personal answer would be it was G-d's intention. It was G-d's plan. But I have also heard my father, himself, say that when I was born or I was conceived in my mother, he had been born as the Servant, the Messenger of G-d, Who manifested Himself with W.F. Muhammad; and by my being born at the time when he was in contact with his Savior, the G-d in Person, helped to form me, not only as a child of his loins, but a child for the mission.

**B.N**.: You said you have been 'groomed' by your father for this position. Why and for how long?

**Chief Min**.: I have been groomed because it was necessary. Just being born of a body quickened by Divine Word was not enough. All the other spiritual leaders who had been chosen for a great spiritual role and responsibility did not only have a Divine Birth, but they also had the best qualified people to watch over their development—their religious development.

My father watched over my religious development and he had done that for as far back as I can remember.

**B.N**.: What is your true function in relationship to your father and his teachings?

**Chief Min**.: My true function is told in the mission of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and in the duties and responsibilities that were his before my coming into this office.

My function is no different. My relationship to him is, in fact, no relationship now. But in this role and in this office as a mind and heart, directed by Almighty G-d, I am the same as he.

**B.N**.: Did your father ever prepare or teach anyone else, just in case you wouldn't be available for leadership?

**Chief Min**.: He prepared and taught many. He prepared and taught each member of his immediate family and many outside of the immediate family who are also members of the family. He regarded all of his followers as members of a broad family, and he prepared and taught them also.

But there was never any doubt in his mind that \ would be the one who would come to this office.

**B.N**.: If something should happen to you, do you feel that the Nation of Islam will survive?

**Chief Min**.: I answer those who have this question with the divine manifestation seen in our Saviour's Day success and successes—the Nation of Islam is divine work. It is not subject to physical weaknesses or deaths.

**B.N**.: Do you claim divine inspiration or knowledge of speaking with G-d?

**Chief Min.**: I do not claim anything, but I honor the great gift of G-d in favoring me to come into this office. G-d watches over me and G-d guides me in those areas wherein His Personal Guidance is needed.

**B.N**.: Will you discipline the Muslims like your father, the Messenger of Allah, did?

**Chief Min**.: The discipline that the world has taken note of, that they see in the membership of the Nation of Islam, was not the work of my father as an earthly man; it was the work of G-d, and that discipline will stay.

**B.N**.: When and why were you sent to jail?

**Chief Min**.: I was sentenced, I believe, Oct. 29, 1961 for failing to report to Elgin State Hospital as was required under those laws affecting conscientious objectors.

I was sentenced to three years to be spent at Sandstone, Minn. Federal Correctional Institution. My sentence term began Oct. 30, 1961, and I was released on parole Jan. 10, 1963.

**B.N.:** What did you occupy yourself with while in jail?

**Chief Min**.: Islamic studies—the Qur'an was available—and Bible studies; the study of my father as a great Divinely guided leader of the Nation of Islam and his teachings and work; the studies of his people, our people, so-called Negroes who were imprisoned and who formed with me in prison one close community of convicts. I gained a lot from this study.

I learned to understand the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, especially his admiration for his people and his special love for his people, and his special faith that he showed by always giving big challenges to his people to accept and meet with dignity.

**B.N**.: Now that you are the Chief Minister of the Nation of Islam, what will your programs and policies be? Will they be the same as your father’s?

**Chief Min**.: The programs and policies will be dictated as they we've dictated when the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was physically, spiritually with us. They are dictated by Divine Guidance, most of which were established in the long history and great works of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. If there should be any change or any need for additions, it will come just as it came to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

The dictates will be the same as those that were given to my father. They come from scripture that he had a unique eye for that he could interpret rightly. They also come from G-d's own help. They will be the same.

**B.N**.: As Chief Minister, will you have all the powers that your father had, or does 'not being the Messenger' imply that you will have less power and authority? If so, in what areas?

**Chief Min**.: Well, I will ask those who would like to know more on this question to research or study the history of prophetic figures in the Bible and Qur'an.

Moses was called the Prophet or Messenger of G-d, may peace be upon him, and Joshua came into that leadership. When Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Arabia, physically passed away and spiritually returned to his G-d, the leadership remained. History shows it as a power equal or the same as that which existed under the personal supervision of that Arabian Prophet.

Messenger is a title. It speaks of or describes a birth and mission. That is, how that mission came to that man. One who inherits and is favored with the same support that is given to the Messenger has another name to describe him or to identify him or to stand as a title for him.

That name or title for me is Chief Minister of the Nation of Islam. And my role is not that of a Messenger of G-d, but that of a "Mujeddid," meaning "One to watch over the new Islam" and to see that it is constantly and continually being

renewed.

**B.N**.: Brother Minister, I noticed when you mentioned the Prophet Moses, you said: "May the peace of Allah be upon him." Will you teach your followers when they refer to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad to say this?

**Chief Min**.: Yes.

**B.N**.: You used the word "mujeddid" to describe your position. What is the translation of that word into English as one word?

**Chief Min**.: Mujeddid means reviver; one who renews.

**B.N**.: Could you elaborate on some of your short-term and future goals for the Nation of Islam and the black community? Or will this question be considered by you for a future date?

**Chief Min**.: Certainly, I could elaborate—but I think I would not be fair to the great work load that the ever-advancing Honorable Elijah Muhammad, may the peace of Allah be upon him, left with us.

This work load required that we stay busy in those things that were already in progress under the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, may the peace of Allah be upon him. It would be improper at this time to talk of future under my personal direction.

**B.N**.: It is understood that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, your father, stated that the Nation of Islam no longer turned towards the East for leadership. Will this be the prevailing policy, or will the Nation seek leadership in the East?

**Chief Min**.: It is true that the Hon. Elijah Muhammad taught us not to turn to the East for leadership. Turning to the East was symbolic. For the Sun rises in the East and the Sun brings us light to begin our day. This is symbolic of truth coming to the West from the East, but is also prophesied that the Sun of Truth would rise in the West. The Hon. Elijah Muhammad's leadership and his work is the answer to that prophecy.

No, we do not turn to the East for leadership. The Nation of Islam will not seek leadership in the East.

**B.N**.: We also noted that your father spoke of the numbers of Muslims on earth. He included the same number that any orthodox Muslim would give for the total number of Muslims on earth, and he considered all Muslims as brothers: he taught his followers that they were a part of that great, vast body.

How is it that he taught this on the one hand, and on the other hand, he did not have white Muslims or foreign Muslims in his meetings? Still he considered them as being brothers in Islam, to him and to the Muslims in Islam. Do you care to elaborate on that?

**Chief Min**.: Yes—the Honorable Elijah Muhammad has referred to or called the Nation of Islam the "baby" nation. A baby remains under the private care of its mother until it is strong enough to go out into the broad world of society.

**B.N**.: What will be your relationship with Orthodox Muslims?

**Chief Min**.: All Muslims are brothers. Our relationship will be that of one independent community of Muslims with other independent communities of Muslims.

**B.N**.: Do you have plans to travel throughout America and into foreign countries or remain mostly at your Headquarters here in Chicago?

**Chief Min**.: I have been to the Holy City Mecca. I have made the Hajji and two Omerahs, that are also Jahhi out of Jahhi season.

My only plans for travel at present are visits to those regions in the membership of the Nation of Islam, the South region, the West region and the East region.

**B.N**.: What plans do you have for your successor should anything happen to you?

**Chief Min**.: As G-d protected the work and leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, He will do the same for this. It is the same. We are not at this time bothered by this question. When the time comes, it will be made known.

**B.N**.: We have read that your father, the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has received numerous awards and recognition from non-Muslims and whites. This tells us that your father was respected as a leader, not only among the black community, but among white people and high government officials.

In what way are you going to show these people who had so much love and respect for your father that you are a leader who has respect for the people and leaders whose opinions and religion is different from yours?

**Chief Min**.: First, I wish to say that the members of the white community have asked my father to permit them to be his followers because they sympathize with him and his great work. They understood the problem and wished to make amends, not for themselves, particularly, but for their people.

There are many other such persons who have not indicated or perhaps have not even wished to become members or followers, but they have expressed their willingness to support the positive work of this office for social reform, etc.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad treated all of his guests with the greatest respect and concern. Many of them who sat at this table were white. This same respect will be shown.

Also, government officials have paid great tribute to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, the Nation of Islam and this great work. We honor and cherish their tributes. Mayors of great cities of the United States, black and white, have paid such tributes.

The governor and the mayor of this city paid such tribute. We make no distinction between those government leaders who paid tribute to the Hon. Elijah Muhammad, the Nation of Islam and his great work.

**B.N**.: Will you seek financial help from the city and state that is justly due the educational department here in Chicago?

**Chief Min**.: Yes, just as we have already done. This is also on record. We will not give up this effort.

**B.N**.: To what do Muslims attribute their high record of family solidarity and low rate of delinquency?

**Chief Min**.: Divine teachings.

**B.N**.: Honorable Wallace D. Mohammed—this question, I know, is in the minds of the people: Do you know how much personal wealth your father has in money and in property? And are you allowed to tell us how much he left to his children and how much he left to the Nation?

**Chief Min**.: The monies and properties belonging personally to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad are a private matter. If it is required, or if ever it becomes proper to make it public, we will not hesitate to do so. We have nothing to hide.

**B.N**.: Would you explain to us how it is that you were once out of the Nation of Islam and all your older brothers, who never were in discord with your father and his teachings have now accepted you totally as the leader of the Nation of Islam without any envy or jealousy of you. Would you say this is unusual?

**Chief Min**.: No, it is not unusual if we look at it from a scriptural viewpoint. Joseph was sold into slavery and became a help to his community in Egypt. Moses was raised in the house of the Pharaoh and acquired know-how that was needed by his people. It was Divinely planned that I should go out from the physical Nation of Islam to get those experiences necessary and come back to the Nation of Islam.

**B.N**.: We who have studied your father's teachings and watched its growth have noted that within the last two or three years, he had been getting away from making as his main issue, the mistreatments the black man has received from the hands of the white man, especially in calling the white people "devils."

Why do you feel that he stopped stressing that the white man is the devil?

**Chief Min**.: A Messenger or a Divinely guided man has a responsibility to deliver a message and point to direction and signs. You point out an enemy to focus attention on the enemy. When that attention has been given and the enemy has begun to reform or to correct his conduct, it would be uncivilized and certainly un-G-dly to stay with the finger pointing violently at the enemy.

**B.N**.: Are you going to follow the trend of not putting stress on the white man's past atrocities against the black man?

**Chief Min**.: Yes, the past is the past, unless it is dug up. We will not dig it up.

**B.N**.: Will you keep the name Black Muslim which your father, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his offspring, accepted officially in editorials in some of his columns?

**Chief Min**.: The name Black Muslim was not given by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad; may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. This name was given by Dr. C. Eric Lincoln in his book on the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and his great work.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad has wisely treated this name given by Dr. Lincoln. He has treated it in such a way to make it clear that he rejects it as a racist label, but accepts it as an identifying term which groups him and his followers with all black people.

**B.N**.: Do you plan to build any memorial or edifice to the memory of your father, the most Honorable Elijah Muhammad, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him?

**Chief Min**.: This is the desire and wish of the immediate family members. It is also accepted as the desire of our national leadership and the general membership.

**B.N**.: How does the Honorable Wallace Mohammed perceive his role in history and in leading black people universally?

**Chief Min**.: I perceive this role as the role of an office established by G-d. It is no different than the role of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

**B.N**.: What are some of the good memories and some of the bad memories you recall from your early childhood days growing up in the household of your father, of your father, of prison and of your grandfather's death?

**Chief Min**.: Among the good memories, I recall first in the very earliest times of my childhood how I was influenced and captured by the devotion of my mother, Sister Clara Muhammad, may peace be upon her. She was devoted 100 per cent. She was a selfless person, a self-sacrificing person for the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, may peace and blessing be upon him.

And seeing a mother so selfless and so self-sacrificing and seeing her more concerned about pleasing the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, may peace and blessings be upon him, than she was about pleasing herself, went into me and helped to make me the person I am today. It was my first food.

Secondly, among these good memories, was the fear, respect and love in my brothers and sisters and other immediate members of the family. No matter how angry they became, no matter how emotionally upset they became, they never became blind to the need for self-preservation of themselves as members in the following of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad. They, too, grew on the same food given to me from my parents, a unique, close and Divine relationship.

Also, the followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad from the earliest times of my life, that I can now recall, I can see sacrificing themselves, their time, their possessions, and even their very lives for the Hon. Elijah Muhammad and for the care and safety of his immediate family.

I recall many of them. I will not name any of them now, because I don't think it would be fair to others to name a few and not name all. I recall them being so dear to us that my other brothers and sisters and I often think of them as aunts, uncles and relatives in our family.

The bad memories are hard to recall simply because the good memories are so over-whelming. But I do recall a few:

One, being the arrest of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad by the government for refusing World War II draft. I recall his being taken from our home in the 60th Block on Vernon Ave., in Chicago.

Another bad memory I recall is the ugly treatment and the ugly names that this great man, this divine leader, the Hon. Elijah Muhammad, and his family members received by innocent, but very misinformed members of the black community in the early history of his works.

But, we lived to see many of these people who treated us so badly in the black community, come to us again and apologize for their bad conduct. Some of them became members in the Nation of Islam.

**B.N**.: What did Master W.D. Fard Muhammad tell your father about you before your birth and when was this first revealed to you and by whom?

**Chief Min**.: I couldn't truthfully say who revealed it to me first, but I can only remember my mother because she kept it before me. She told me that before I was born, while I was growing in her, my name was put on the door, on the back of the door in chalk by Master W.F. Muhammad.

He told her and my father that the baby would be a boy and a helper to his father. I recall also my father telling me many times that he asked for a boy and was told that he would get a boy.

He wanted a boy to help him in his work. He was asked to give the promise that if he received a boy he would let the boy help him in his work.

**B.N**.: Did this knowledge make your early childhood different in any way? What fears, or joy did you experience as a result of this knowledge?

**Chief Min**.: I can't say that this knowledge influenced me or influenced my early childhood in any certain way or influenced me to become different. But looking back at my childhood, as an adult, now, I do know that it did influence me. But I was not aware of the influences then.

It was a kind of subtle influence. It was intended for my protection and for my growth. It was not given to make me aware of myself as any special person.

I did not think of myself as any special person. I only, now, think of myself as a special person because I have come into a special office.

**B.N**.: Your father always spoke out strongly against injustice and oppression inflicted upon black people in America and his theme, as noted on the emblem of MUHAMMAD SPEAKS newspaper (former name of the BILALIAN NEWS) was freedom, justice and equality for the so-called Negro.

Do you intend to tone down this theme or shall you continue the struggle against injustice for freedom waged by your father for the black man here in America?

**Chief Min**.: I will follow as my father has led (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). When evil began to subside, we began to tone down. But we will not spare any of our energy or even our lives if necessary to see that our people receive freedom, justice and equality, and all people, for that matter.

**B.N**.: Do you plan to meet with other black leaders? If so, how often?

**Chief Min**.: The Honorable Elijah Muhammad met with and invited the most outstanding leaders. This will be continued. I have longed to meet many of our great black leaders outside the Nation of Islam, and I anticipate meeting them. We will meet as often as it is necessary.

I hope there will not be any great lapse of time between my seeing the great leaders of our people, who've worked and sacrificed for the good of our people, but are not members of the Nation of Islam.

**B.N**.: What has been your most important decision thus far, as leader of the Nation of Islam?

**Chief Min**.: The decision to continue to seek G-d first and last and give my whole self to Him alone has been my most important decision.

**B.N**.: Do you feel as though you will be living in your father's shadow?

**Chief Min**.: I know the thought here. I would like to change the word "shadow" to "light." I feel as though I will be living in my father's light.

**B.N**.: Will you continue the policy of racial separation?

**Chief Min**.: The expression-racial separation, as it is understood in the Nation of Islam, especially by those who have had direct contact with the Hon. Elijah Muhammad and who heard him teach on this kind of separation personally, and I have received his teachings from his own mouth, know that racial separation in the Nation of Islam is far different from the meaning of racial separation in the language of white supremacy.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad received, and respected white guests. White guests drank from his own cups and used his own chinaware, his spoons, and forks. No one told the table servants to break up those cups and see that these forks were not used again.

Racial separation has its place in the program for the resurrection and restoration of the fallen and oppressed black community. It has no place in the language of white supremacy and nor does it have a meaning in such language.

**B.N**.: Have you received condolences from many leaders in the Muslim countries on the death of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad? If so, which ones?

**Chief Min**.: We have received many condolences from Muslims all over the world, and Arab Muslims speaking for many in Arab lands.

**B.N**.: Will you accept or seek the U.S. Government's financial aid if needed? Chief Min.: Yes, we will.

**B.N**.: Do you think that the Muslim organization is influenced by outsiders who are attempting to cause trouble?

**Chief Min**.: No, indeed.

**B.N**.: When did you really know that you would take over such an important position as head of the Nation of Islam?

**Chief Min**.: When the time required it and G-d wanted it, at that time, I knew.

**B.N**.: When did you last talk with the Honorable Elijah Muhammad?

**Chief Min**.: My last talk with the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was a few days before his passing at Mercy Hospital.

**B.N**.: Do you believe that you can carry the affairs of the Nation of Islam equally as well as your father did?

**Chief Min**.: If this question had been asked of him, if he believed that he could carry out the duties, his answer would have been: Allah is with me and behind me; He will see that these duties are carried out. That is exactly my answer.

**B.N**.: How do you feel about your new position?

**Chief Min**.: I feel that much has been given me, and that I have been greatly favored by Almighty G-d and by the members of the Nation of Islam, from the highest office to those who carry duties from the lowest offices.

I give you the answer to this question in the Bible words: "To whom much is given, much is required."

**B.N**.: Do you think that Islam is the answer for the black man in America and all over the earth?

**Chief Min**.: Yes, I do. I say as the Honorable Elijah Muhammad said, 'Islam is the answer to the problem of the black man in America.

**B.N**.: What are your plans for the hospital since your hospital drive is going on?

**Chief Min**.: We do not and cannot give up working for those projects desired and worked toward by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad under his leadership. The drive will continue. We will not rest until we have his desire which is our desire, a hospital for our people.

**B.N**.: Do you feel that the white man can become a Muslim?

**Chief Min**.: Yes, I do. But, when he becomes a Muslim, he will no longer be white—he will just simply be Muslim.

**B.N**.: Through your organization, black people have been able to find that missing element so vital to social existence, that of identity. Would you say that your movement is a social one, and that after which it is a religious one?

**Chief Min**.: Islam, and especially under the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, religion, embraces and incorporates all the vital institutions of society. It is spiritual, moral, social, economic, and the like.

**B.N**.: Will you continue to have representatives from your organization enter the various jails, administering help to the inmates as your father has done in the past?

**Chief Min**.: The Honorable Elijah Muhammad did this in fulfillment of the Scripture, that he would go into the prison-houses and open the prison doors.

That means that he would go into the prison-houses with the words of truth that have in them the power to reform, to rehabilitate the convicted, and justify the innocent.

And it is only with this key that a prison can truly be opened. For just opening a physical door often proves to mean little, for many return because their lives have not been changed.