# 07-25-1975

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# The Nation Of Islam: An Alternative Culture For America

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

(Editor's note: The following special interview was conducted with the Honorable W. D. Mohammed for CBS-TV by Mr. Randy Daniels.)

CBS: Mr. Mohammed, since your ascent to leadership of the Nation of Islam, have you decided any particular direction that you feel the Nation should go in?

CHIEF MIN.: "I have decided to work hard to keep the Nation of Islam moving in the same direction that it has always gone in. That direction is the direction of truth, freedom, justice and equality for the Black man in America, which is good for everybody else. There are no new directions. The directions are the same as in the early days (1930's and 1940's) of this movement. I recall the late 40's myself. In the teachings we were always reminded not to refer to our movement as a 'race,' but that we should refer to it as a 'Nation.' Our Leader, the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah forever be upon Him), would say that a Nation includes all.

There were plenty clues left for us that only those who were not caught up emotionally in the 'blackness' of the movement would be sober enough to define or to detect. I, as a young man, studied the teachings of my father and I saw these clues. I began working on them, organizing them, and putting them together in a kind of teaching or sober thinking that would solve the problems of members who are too emotional to settle down and look at the reality of our problem. I made a program of gradual steps toward bringing the truth out as it was intended to be brought out."

CBS: There are a number of people who suggest that the Nation is taking a different course in allowing whites to become part of the Nation of Islam. First of all, was there ever an official ban on whites in the first place, and does this proclamation represent any shift at all in that direction?

CHIEF MIN.: "Yes, it does. There was a ban on whites. No whites were permitted to come into our private meetings. There was not only a ban on whites, there was a ban also on Arabs, Indians, Mexicans, and anybody outside of the Black American community. They were refused admission or membership. It's quite involved. The Nation of Islam is not a physical movement, it's a spiritual movement. The teachings on color are very complicated unless the listeners are familiar with scriptural language. It would be very difficult for me, in a few minutes, to explain exactly what we mean when we say 'white man.' I will try to do as best I can in this couple of minutes.

"The teachings of Master Fard Muhammad was that a 'white man' is not a white man. He asked a question to build a kind of catechism for the Nation of Islam and my father. One of the questions was, 'Who is the colored man?' The answer is, The colored man is the so-called white man.' You see here that we began with our own definition of what is 'white.' It sounds funny and contradictory that He would call the white man a 'colored man.'

"What this question is saying is that the white man is not a pure man; he's not really white. He is a colored man. By 'colored' He meant that the white supremacist mind of the man has been colored. His mind is filled with colors so his mind is colored. He thinks of people in terms of color, so he is a 'colored man' or a colored mind. This is what we rejected: the colored mind of the so-called white man. So I tell all of the listeners who listen to me talk on the so-called change of policy that there is really no change of policy. We are making more efforts now than ever to keep out 'white' people. Not white-skinned people, but white-minded people."

CBS: Does your acceptance or proclamation to whites who are in the right state of mind mean that they can be accepted into the Nation of Islam?

CHIEF MIN.: "It means that they can now join the most worthy movement, as far as religion is concerned, that has been started in the history of the world. They can now come with us and remake the world. That's what we believe we are doing right now. We know we can do it. Those whites who identify with our thinking can come in and join us and take the lead in giving moral direction to the world. That's what the world needs most of all."

CBS: It appears that the Nation of Islam is moving towards a closer association with other organizations. Is that one of your goals and, if so, what are the objectives of such a movement.

CHIEF MIN.: "We feel that now is the time for us to translate our language into the language of the general public. When we do that, everybody can see that our language is a universal language. Everybody can come in and take his or her place and work with us. Now that we have come to the point in the development of the Nation of Islam that we can translate our language for all of the people, we want to work closer with all operations in the community that are of the same mind of the Nation of Islam; that is, those operations that are trying to uplift their community.

CBS: Do you have any specifics?

CHIEF MIN.: "We have established a Community Relations Department and an Office of Human Development. We have looked for the best people in the Nation of Islam throughout the country and these people will head these departments.

"Our strongest contribution is the contribution of social concepts. I, and the majority of the leaders in the Nation of Islam, feel that our strength is in our ability to propagate clean, simple, social concepts. To us man means 'mind' and woman means 'mind' too. Woman means 'the womb of mind.' That is, whether the mind belongs to a male body or a female body, the mind gets it growth first from the female. So this new interpretation brings about a kind of new dignity, a new respect, and a higher value of self. These new social concepts are the things we take pride in as our valuable contributions to the society.

"You might say. 'Your business accomplishments are terrific.' These are terrific accomplishments simply because we have found our base to stand on and that is clear, correct, and true-to-nature social concepts."

CBS: What about the Nation's position at this point? Do you feel that redefining the terms and enlightening the public on where the Nation is will prove beneficial in terms of gaining more members, and do you think that the Nation of Islam is something that more Blacks will consider now?

CHIEF MIN.: "I hope that we will convince those who are interested that we have an alternative culture and an alternative morality. We are not dedicated by a pledge to establish Islam at any cost or to force people to come into something that they don't want to come into. We want to show those people who are really interested in what we are doing, and who like it, and who see the value in it, that we do have an alternative. It is a good, safe and pure alternative for all people if they want to become a part of it. We feel that if we can establish correct definition where people can talk and communicate without problems, and can understand each other better, then we believe that we would have done our part to correct the wrongs in the world. If we did not more than that, it would be good enough. We hope to do much more."

CBS: Minister Mohammed, for so many years the Nation of Islam was projected as being filled with religious zealots, people who were trying to establish Islam whatever the cost. How do you change such an image in such a short time and attract the very people that you want to reach out to? Doesn't that image still stick in their minds?

CHIEF MIN.: "Yes, it does. It is regretful that human beings, like plants, germinate or fall into a seasonal thing. There is a season for coldness and a season for warmth. When the season for warmth came to us, as the Nation of Islam, we were excited, and it was a more physical thing than anything else for many of us. We were giving our minds and attention to ritual more than real knowledge or principles of belief and practice. We had given ourselves to more ritualistic type things. We were concerned about how close the hair was cut, the head and the face would be clean all the time, and body had to be fully dressed with a suit, white shirt, and bow tie. You would walk always like a soldier. So we were in uniform all the time. That was just a seasonal manifestation."

CBS: Was there a purpose there?

CHIEF MIN.: "There was a purpose. The purpose was to bring about uniformity and discipline. Most of us came from undisciplined lives in the early history of the Nation of Islam and in the middle time before me. We came from lives that showed little or no discipline at all. The Nation of Islam puts heavy emphasis on discipline. That is why you have observed the rigidity of the Believers, how they walk and how they stick to what they have to say and never back off. That was necessary and we accomplished a great deal during that time.

"Now the season has come for fruit to bear. If we stay in that physical image, we won't bear intellectual or mental fruit. We realize now that we have to stop putting emphasis on the uniformity of morality and intelligence. I think that what you see now in the Nation of Islam will be a new kind of discipline and a more sophisticated discipline. Believers now are conscious of giving themselves to the winds of emotions and they question themselves when they hear these emotional arousing words or messages. They say, "Am I responding to this because I am Black or am I responding to this because I have been overcome by Blackness. We still have a discipline but it's a more sophisticated discipline."

CBS: There are all sorts of rumors, some saying that in the leadership of the Nation of Islam that there is internal strife and that you personally can never hold the Nation together. It has been said that Minister Wallace is not calling the shots. Could you address yourself to that?

CHIEF MIN.: "Yes I will. First, I'd say that I don't feel that Minister Wallace can hold the Nation of Islam by Himself. I don't think any other man can hold the Nation by himself. We have to have something that all of the people can identify with and enjoy and that the majority can accept and feel as though it is theirs and they are part of it and it belongs to them: that's truth. If any man can stand up and give the people truth, he'll get the majority on his side. I have the majority in the body and I have the majority in the leadership.

The people that I hear who are supposedly challenging the leadership or challenging my office are my best supporters. Minister Farrakhan; the greatest champ of all times as far as I'm concerned, Muhammad Ali; and my brother, Herbert Muhammad, are some of my strongest supporters. So it's not true at all."

CBS: The Nation of Islam has some rather wide financial contacts in the Middle East, and you are very well respected in the Middle East. Can we anticipate, with the large amount of surplus oil money that is going to be available in the Middle East, that we can see some investments in the U.S. in conjunction with the Nation of Islam?

CHIEF MIN.: "I believe that's conceivable. Right now, what we are interested in is improvement and expansion. We want to expand our Universities of Islam, so we are interested in scholarships that we have offered to us from an Arab Muslim country. They have offered scholarships and have offered to exchange students with us. They have even offered to help us staff our schools. We are interested in that more so than we are interested in financial investments. But we do hope anybody with a lot of money who doesn't know what to do with it will see that the Nation of Islam is doing something that is truly unique and phenomenal in the Black community as far as establishing businesses and employing members of the Black community. Here in Chicago the Nation of Islam has employed about a thousand people in our businesses. So if anyone has a lot of money and is looking for worthy causes, we're hoping that they will recognize that we are a most worthy cause."

CBS: It has been said that there might be discontentment with the acceptance of whites in the Nation of Islam and that really the proclamation means that the door is ajar, but it's not wide open to whites. Could you spell out that proclamation to us?

CHIEF MIN.: "There are a few who feel that this is the wrong move and that we should keep the whites out. These are a minority in the Nation and a few sympathizers out of the movement too. If we were politicians maybe we would go back and rewrite our plans, but we are not politicians and we follow the dictates of Divine Guidance. We know what we are doing is right and if everybody would just clear their heads they could see it's right. I don't insist that people clear their heads. Some people have a right to go around with heads not cleared up. They have suffered so much that I can understand it. But we have to do what we have to do. If whites come to the movement and, as I said before, if they recognize and respect what we are doing enough to become a part of it, then we feel that we are obligated to protect their rights."

The Wisdom Of W. D. Mohammed:

A prophet is one who understands something of truth. He knows that there is a G-d and he feels the reality of a righteous being in his own life. Because of his purity (clean mind) and his willingness to follow righteousness, he is able to predict what will happen to people who rebel against the right way (the way of the prophets). In being able to predict, he is given the name "Prophet."

Prophet means one who has the power to prophesy. That kind of man is not needed in the world today. There is no need to prophesy because of this or that. The word "prophesy" is the wrong word to use for what we are telling you today. We tell you, in fact, what is going to happen if you go in a certain direction. That is not the same as prophesying.

The very word "prophesy" suggests a lack of knowledge. It means that the person can't see all of the way. He sees only part way, so he predicts the rest of the way. This is the day and time when we don't prophesy anymore. Today, the Divine Mind sees all the way. The knowledge given to you by the Divine Mind, brothers and sisters, will make you greater than the prophets.