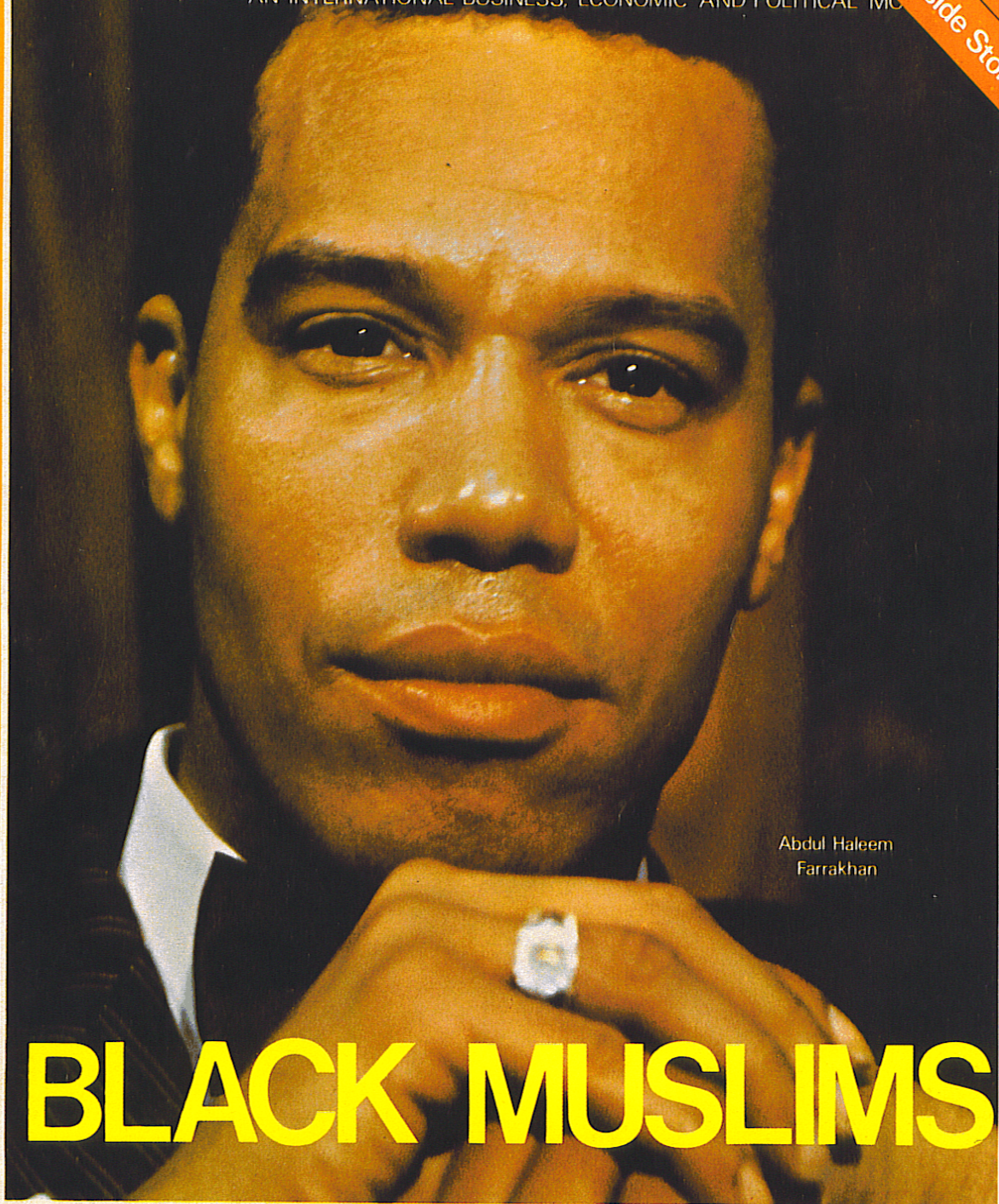


AFRICA

AN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL MONTHLY

Sudan's Coup: Inside Story
CIA in Africa
Spotlight on Somalia



Abdul Haleem
Farrakhan

BLACK MUSLIMS

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INTERVIEW

ABDUL FARRAKHAN

MINISTER,
NATION OF ISLAM

interviewed by Howard Lee

The "Nation of Islam" is perhaps the most successful mass movement of Black people in the United States. Founded 43 years ago in Detroit, Michigan by Elijah Muhammad, it is now a multi-million dollar international operation. It published Black America's largest weekly newspaper and has a network of temples, universities and business enterprises throughout the United States. Since the death of Muhammad a few months ago, the leadership of the movement has passed to his son W.D. Muhammad, who has announced radical changes in its philosophy and membership. In this interview Abdul Hakeem Farrakhan, National Representative of W.D. Muhammad, talks to AFRICA Assistant Editor, Howard Lee, about the movement's beliefs and aims.

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■ AFRICA: Minister Farrakhan, how would you describe the Nation of Islam to an outsider?

● FARRAKHAN: The Nation of Islam is a group of Black brothers and sisters in the United States who have formed themselves into a unit, under the divine guidance of Islam and the Holy Q'uran for the purpose of solving the many problems that we face, and have faced, as Black people in White America.

■ AFRICA: How would you say the Nation differs from traditional civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured people (NAACP) or the Urban League?

● FARRAKHAN: The civil rights groups have worked to make inroads within the system, to frame laws that protect and guarantee justice for Black people. All of these advances made by the civil rights movement we admire and applaud. However, our thrust has been the individual. We are not looking for outsiders to do for us what we believe we could unite and do for ourselves. So, while the civil rights groups might picket to get an inroad into this company or the other company, or to get more jobs, or to get more rights, we believe that we have the power within ourselves to create these rights within ourselves.

■ AFRICA: What specific things could you point to as evidence of your success in creating an independent or self-reliant Black economy?

● FARRAKHAN: The first thing that the Honourable Master Elijah Muhammad (may peace be upon him) taught us is that we had to go to the earth because we are a nation of consumers rather than a nation of producers. For us to be productive, he said, we must have some earth that we can call our own. So we pooled our resources and we began to purchase thousands of acres within the continental United States, and some land outside it to begin producing our own food. From there we transported this food to our own supermarkets which we had set up. We experimented with canning factories, and we are now taking the produce from our farms into our own canning factories, producing our own can goods for our own supermarkets. We have gone into international trade on a small scale, or maybe a large scale, it depends on how you look at it. We are now the largest importers of frozen fish in the United States of America. Last year we imported over twenty-two million pounds of fish into this country, which we distributed in the ghettos to our people. We have entered into trade with the government of Morocco in North Africa and we have begun the importation of 500,000 tins of sardines each month. This is going to increase as we increase our trade with our brothers and sisters around the world. It is the success of our economics that has enabled us to support our school system. We have forty-six universities of Islam in America that we are supporting. Again, the success of the Nation of Islam can be measured by the fact that we have almost wiped out drug taking, divorce, family break-up, vandalism and indiscipline in school, which are still rampant in the White society.

■ AFRICA: Why is it that your members do not participate in the political system, and will that attitude change?

● FARRAKHAN: I cannot speak for tomorrow, but as for now, we don't believe that the corrupt political system of White America can solve the problems of Black people. We believe that the way we're going about it will bring about a solution.

■ AFRICA: Since the death of the Honourable Elijah Muhammad, there have been several important changes in the Nation of Islam. Whites are no longer singled out as the enemies of Black people, women have been given more responsibilities and the Nation has announced a worldwide

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mission. Why have you made those changes?

● FARRAKHAN: They are not sudden. We are not today what we were yesterday, nor shall we be tomorrow what we are today. This is the success of the Nation of Islam. Nobody has been able to write about us without his writings becoming stale within a few years. We are an evolving nation that is in accord with the natural laws of growth and development. The Honourable Wallace D. Muhammad is giving us a profound teaching on women in general. He has said to us that all over the world women have suffered because of misinterpretations of the scriptures. Society has always worked against the true freedom of women, and that is chiefly because society has been ordered by men. But, women have brilliant minds, and if their minds can be developed and nourished with the right food, they will make an important contribution to the development of society. So, the Black woman must be liberated from the false ideas that have been instilled in her. Coming to your other point, the Honourable Master Elijah Muhammad taught us that White people were devils. However, what the Honourable Wallace D. Muhammad is doing is refining the language. The problem is not the White people as such, not the people you see in the flesh, but a mentality of lies, tricks, and of falsehood which is used to divide, rule, conquer, subdue and crush the legitimate aspirations of human beings. That is the devil, and it can be in any flesh, Black, White, Brown or Yellow. It is that refinement of the teaching of the Honourable Master Elijah Muhammad that you are seeing in the Nation of Islam today.

■ AFRICA: Could you be more specific. Why has the Nation of Islam decided to open its membership to White people?

● FARRAKHAN: Because we are Muslims. What Black America failed to take into consideration was our legitimate claim on Islam as our religion. We taught Blackness because we had been victimized by Whiteness, and the germ of Blackness had to be given to the sick mentality of Black people who had been given a White racist philosophy supported by Christianity. In order to bring the Black man out of that, we offered him another extreme, but that extreme is not good either. It was necessary to correct the White mentality. Now, we have to bring the Black racist mentality to a balanced mentality where it will not be hung up on the external composition of the human family, but will rather look at the mind that dwells within that composition. We do not in a true brotherhood recognise colour class nor national origin. We who had all those hang-ups had to be given an antidote. What we were given as an antidote was poison but, it was necessary to restore some harmonious balance to the mind so that we could put on that mind the true divine message of Islam.

■ AFRICA: What has been the community's response to the admission of White people to the Temple?

● FARRAKHAN: All the natural things that we would expect from a people still revolving in the womb of emotions. But you see, the Nation of Islam is not a political movement that keeps its head to the ground listening to the pulsating rhythm of mass thinking. We listen to the dictates of Allah as found in his scriptures and we move according to the time. The Nation of Islam has always been in the vanguard of the thinking of the Black community. When the Black community arrives at one stage of development where they think they have got the Nation of Islam down, we move on to another level that shakes up the Black community. We are always a step ahead, not behind.

■ AFRICA: Several years ago, an article in *Muhammad Speaks* reported that the Nation had received close to a \$3m. loan or grant from the Government of Libya. What was that money used for, and what is the Nation's present

relations with Libya and other Moslem countries?

● FARRAKHAN: It was used to buy a Temple and school at our headquarters in Chicago. We have, to the best of my knowledge repaid much of that loan, if not all of it. We are very grateful to the Libyan Government and its great leader, Colonel Gaddafi, for their great generosity. We are strengthening our relations with our Moslem brothers in the East and we intend to do everything in our power to strengthen our relationships with our Africa brothers on the Continent and with our people around the earth.

■ AFRICA: There have been varying reports that place the Nation's worth at between \$46m and \$80m. Can you give us an accurate figure?

● FARRAKHAN: The Honourable Wallace D. Muhammad, the Supreme Minister of the Nation of Islam, reported on some of the Nations earnings at a recent meeting in Chicago, and the press reported it around \$46m. He reported only our assets in Chicago, our assets in farmland, our assets from our fish operation and that's as far as he went. We don't feel it necessary to expose ourselves totally to anyone.

■ AFRICA: Could you tell us how strong the Nation is in terms of membership?

● FARRAKHAN: He (Supreme Minister) didn't give the figures in Chicago, but he did say that since January of this year three quarters of a million people have come in and out of the Temples of Islam, and since he has been in office 39,000 new converts have registered.

■ AFRICA: Could you elaborate on the nature of the Nation's world mission? What do you hope to achieve?

● FARRAKHAN: We believe that the divine mission of the prophets of Almighty God has not been completed on earth. However, three great religious communities have evolved from the teachings of the prophets; namely the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims. We believe that the religious mission of all great prophets and those great communities has faltered. It didn't falter from the prophets' end; it faltered in the communities carrying out the prophesies. We believe that we, the Black people in America, who have been conditioned by time and human suffering, and who have known the depths of human poverty like no other people have ever known, have been divinely prepared to complete the mission of all the prophets. That mission is to erase all divisions among men by showing the world that all the prophets and their messages are one, and that humanity is one.

■ AFRICA: How do you intend to carry out this mission?

● FARRAKHAN: The same way that the Nation is moving now. This is not a thing that you accomplish in the span of a lifetime. The Honourable Master Elijah Muhammad, (may peace be upon him) worked 43 long hard years among us. Yet there are Black people in every city in America who don't even know that the man lived. Now his son has picked up the mantle, our children will pick it up after us.

■ AFRICA: What kind of relations does the Nation have with Africa and other parts of the world?

● FARRAKHAN: Our relationship has been one of friendship on an upper level; we have met some African leaders; many African leaders visited the Honourable Master Elijah Muhammad during his lifetime and exchanged views with him. We have been invited to Africa by many government leaders and we intend to honour these invitations. We intend to strengthen our ties with Mother Africa.

■ AFRICA: How do you answer critics who point out that, historically speaking, Moslems have been among the most vigorous slave traders on the African continent, yet we are told that through Islam the Black man can find freedom in the United States of America?