

In Death, Too, Muslims Quiet, Controlled

Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad's wife, Clara, was buried Tuesday.

When the people left the temple after the funeral service, each was given a piece of candy.

Life is sweet, say the Muslims. And black. Most of all, however, it is careful, quiet, and controlled.

Women in White Robes

From a good distance, as you traveled south on Stony Island Avenue toward the Temple of Islam, No. 2, the Muslim women were strikingly visible on the church steps, dressed in flowing white, waiting immobile, like rocks of faith.

Surrounding the long, flowing line of white, which wrapped the black and somber female faces, were the cream of Muhammad's men: the Fruit of Islam, the Muslim militia. Statues in blue, they are young men who would die to save their leader's life.

You can feel the blackness. The leader's wife has died after a long illness. License plates from across the country illustrate how Muslims see their sense of duty. The Cadillacs, Lincoln Continentals, and Buicks, holding up the plates, illustrate a little of how the Muslims see life.

White people aren't welcome, but the way the solitary white man, a newspaper reporter, who enters the church for the service, is treated illustrates how the Muslims see their sense of position and power.

White Is Tolerated

The white man is tolerated with a politeness and protectiveness that guards at all costs against an incident.

Muhammad has said from the pulpit that white men are "devils, savages." So, on the day of Mrs. Muhammad's funeral, the white man is disliked, perhaps hated, with sweetness—carefully, quietly, with control. Life among the Muslims means black.

But an "incident" means losing. Victory has something to do with the Cadillacs, the large, beautiful church surrounded by ghetto, and the expensive suits worn by black men who look at the white

man once, then look away. They don't look again.

Last February, Elijah Muhammad spoke about the South Side: "We want to own it . . . let it be for black people."

Precautions Are Taken

Inside the church, everyone is frisked, men and women, behind curtained partitions. All but wallets and loose change are checked inside brown paper bags.

It has been a long time since Malcolm X was shot



by Rick Soll

down in Harlem. But since that day in February, 1965, Muhammad and his private army have been making sure the leader lives to be an old, old man.

Last January, Muhammad, during a press conference, said, "There is no possibility of anyone taking my life. It is possible that they are threatening my life, but my security is God Himself."

The tall, silent men in blue illustrate that God is getting some help.

As Muhammad said in January: "God will protect us if my followers do as I tell them."

"Allah is the greatest," the Muslim minister chants four times. "Allah is the only God," he finishes.

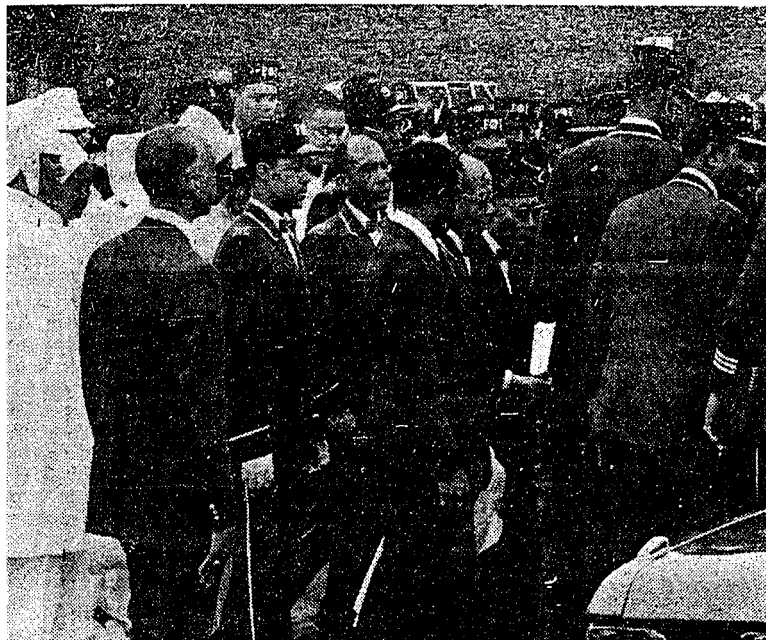
Temple Cool, Silent

The temple is immaculate, cool, completely silent as white-robed women and somber men pass quickly past the open coffin lined in pink.

"Brothers and sisters," the minister says quietly, "you must move quickly. After you pass the remains, you must walk quickly to your cars. Get in them and line up for the procession to the cemetery; if you are going. Make sure to drive within the limits of the law. Thirty miles per hour."

He says it once, and it is done. The leader's wife has died. There will be no slipups.

The phrase, "if you are go-



Fruit of Islam form honor guard around Elijah Muhammad [wearing dark glasses] after funeral services for his wife, Clara.

ing," was the kind of gentle Muslim command supported by iron-bound duty. The funeral procession is nearly three miles long. Almost 100,000 people, say the police, have walked quickly past Mrs. Muhammad's coffin between 10:30 a. m. and 3 p. m. when the service ended.

When the temple had emptied, the coffin was brought down the steps by seven men and placed in the hearse.

Has Large Escort

It took almost 50 men to bring Elijah to his limousine. The slight leader, who took the reins of the sect in 1933 on a platform of separatism, is lost from sight as he descends the steps, surrounded by the tall Fruit of Islam.

There will be no slipups. Only two policemen are needed. And they direct traffic. Elijah Muhammad is protected by God and his army. As far as Muhammad is concerned, white man's protection is as shallow as his faith.

Muhammad got in the car, and the army surrounded it, running with it as it took the lead in the procession. And then he was off to the ceme-

tery, followed by three miles no incident. It is careful, quiet, and controlled.

There is no slipup. There is Hardly a word is uttered.