

On Life In the Sudan

By Bayyinah Sharrieff

One of the first facets of life in the Republic of the Sudan which I observed and subconsciously studied was the female. Being that I was forced to spend most of my time with females in the girls' hostel at the University of Khartoum, Sudan, I watched them very closely. I wanted to see if their outward appearance of calmness and security was real.

I COULD NOT believe at that time that the woman in Islam was content, not dating and mixing with men as she appeared to be. Most of my time was spent with the university students and they passed their time studying and conversing among themselves. Occasionally they would go to the cinema, but when they did it was in one large group and they all sat together in the reserved seats for the female students.

When they walked outside of their homes and the hostel before the public their postures were straight and tall, their eye serious. They would avoid any types of conversation which would make them laugh or cause them to let down their guard in public.

They did not walk slowly, but quickly to their destinations. They did not linger around store fronts. I do not remember seeing one of them run on the street. If they passed a man on the street they would glance down so as not to look in the man's face. Many of the women would pick up their *tobes*, which covered their hair, and bring the cloth across their faces, if they saw a man looking in their direction, so that the man could not see their faces.

They did not go out of their compounds much except perhaps to the market place with a male relative to select cloth and shoes, or the like. They did not go to buy their own groceries alone. Their husband, son or a male relative or house helper would buy the groceries and produce which she would need for her family.

THE SLOWEST that I saw any of them walk was on the campus when changing classes. Of course when they were together they were at ease and relaxed. It was here that I realized femininity. I saw grace in the movements of the Muslim woman when she was within the wall. Her care to her person was a wonder to my eye and I realized the beauty of cleanliness, bathing three times a day, not to mention their preparation for prayer, and washing the hair at least once a week, often twice.

The joy of pleasing others: this is what the Muslim woman wants. I saw this in the Sudan. If they could cause a smile to come on the face of another, pleasure then joy would be seen in their eyes. This was peace. They were very particular about

their garments. The folds in their *tobes* (national dress) had to be just right.

They were shy about their persons—even those who were tall and had heavy frames. They knew their duty was to please. Their smile was a cherished charm which they did not display openly in public to strangers. It was relished in the family. I used to wonder why my female colleagues did not smile or laugh in public. They would become angry with me if I tried to make them laugh in public.

Now that I am a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, I have an understanding of why my female colleagues looked down when passing a male in public, even one of their own colleagues. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad points out in the Holy Qur-an 24:31 . . .

“ . . . say to the Believing women that they lower their gaze . . . and do not display their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers or the fathers of their husbands . . . ”

These are universal teachings of Islam. Had these students looked into the man's face they would be heavily criticized by their society and not respected as a decent woman.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad has special training classes for the woman in Islam to teach them the knowledge of their selves: their actions and attitudes which correspond to being the comfort to the original man and their offspring.

Those in the Islamic society in the Republic of the Sudan had not been exposed to any practices other than their own which were based on the teachings of decency (Islam). I being one in their society was forced to take on their practices for I was outnumbered. This was not difficult for I was not allowed to do anything which they did not do and after submitting to their practices I appreciated them and appreciated learning how to be myself (feminine).

THE REMARKABILITY of the teachings of decency of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad is that those who follow him are in the minority. The Majority are doing other than what the world respects in the line of decency. Yet his followers are standing tall trying in the midst of this filth to be upright.

I know that his teachings are universally in accord with Islam for I have been to the Sudan and Egypt in the Muslim community a total of 23 months and have seen the respected woman in Islam. All praises are due to Allah (God) for raising “ . . . a Messenger from among you (Black man) who purifies you and teaches you the book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know” (Holy Qur-an 2:151): “and guides you into all truth” (John 16:13).



MIRIAM MAKEBA, world famed expatriot songstress from South Africa and wife of Black American militant Stokely Carmichael, was among top attractions at the Pan-African

Cultural Festival. In addition, she helped to raise funds for the affair in pre-festival performances.

IVISUAL IMPACT/5k-b. Bossette

Social Science Study Describes Typical Muslim Family in America

(Muhammad Speaks New York Bureau)

NEW YORK—“The X's are a model of what a self-respecting family ought to be. Mr. X works hard at his job, and when he isn't at work he labors for his church or is at home with his family. Mrs. X devotes herself to being a good wife and mother. She does not have an outside job. She does not wear flashy clothes, elaborate hairdos, or cosmetics. She defers in all important matters to her husband's judgement. Both husband and wife are conscientious parents. They expect their children to behave well, and to work hard at school. They neither drink nor smoke. They do not use profane language.”

THE ABOVE paragraph is from a recent issue of *Transaction*, a journal of social science and modern society, and describes a typical Muslim family in the United States. The publication was reporting a study by Olympic boycott leader Harry Edwards, who was a professor at San Jose State College and now at Cornell, in which he studied both Black Christian and Nation of Islam families and compared the two. His study also received favorable attention in a

recent issue of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*.

Some 28 Afro-American families were selected for the study—half were Muslim, the other half Christian. All the families lived in the same Black neighborhood, which like most, was characterized by dilapidated housing, rats, roaches and a high unemployment rate.

Here are some areas where Edwards found that the followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad differed from the believers in Jesus Christ:

THE HOME: Fathers were mostly unemployed and the wife was the main breadwinner in several Christian homes, while Muslim families left all the wage-earning and important decision-making to the husband by mutual agreement.

While Muslim women were instructed in special classes at the mosque in how to be good housekeepers and cooks and how to sew, some Christian women lacked some of these skills. Conflict in the Christian home was taken for granted to be “inevitable,” including violence, but not so in the Muslim home. “When Muslim couples felt that a quarrel was brewing, they ‘got on the

side of Islam,” that is, they went back to the fundamental principles of their religion, and the quarrel dissipated,” reported the magazine article.

CHILDREN: Although Christian parents used physical punishment frequently, they had “fatalistic attitude” toward their children's wrong-doing. They expected that their youngster would be involved in plenty of mis-deeds, including stealing. On the other hand, Muslim parents the Edwards study showed in the magazine related, rarely hit their children but expected them “to be upright in both thought and action.” While Christian parents tended to be lax in encouraging their off-springs to learn Muslim mothers and fathers encouraged their children to study and learn but be equally aware of the racist-tainted text-book and teachers.

“What makes these Muslims in contrast to their Christian neighbors, so law-abiding and hard-working?” asks the *Transaction* article. “Edwards cite two factors that help explain the success of the Nation of Islam in changing the situation of the Black man in the ghetto: First assistance toward economic self sufficiency comes with membership. Each new member helped to find work he can do or is trained for a job. Second, the Nation of Islam tries to show each new convert that his poverty is closely intertwined with his social and psychological orientations to life. To change his situation in life, he must change his attitudes and habits. He is helped in his very difficult reorientation by the same people who have already helped him to find a job—his Muslim brothers. By providing material aid and training in a new way of living at the same time, the Muslims teach each convert to see his economic, his social, and his religious salvation as one entity. It seems to be a successful recipe.”

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