

Brutal Legacy In Louis Farrakhan's Organization

(Legacy Of Violence In Nation Of Islam)

By Br. A. Idris Palmer

Minneapolis, Minnesota, Jan. 12, 1995: Malik Shabazz' daughter, Qubilah, is indicted by a federal grand jury on allegedly trying to hire a hit man to kill 'Nation of Islam' leader, Louis Farrakhan, who Malcolm X's family believes played a role in his 1965 assassination.

The following day, in the wake of public suspicion regarding Farrakhan's role in Malcolm X's slaying 30 years earlier, the Nation of Islam moves quickly to shift the focus of public attention from Farrakhan to the government.

Nation officials call a press conference and issue a press release, which ominously reads, "The identity of the alleged plotters was said to be some members of a 'Muslim extremist group'. We do not know Ms. Shabazz to be a member of any such group. We call on the FBI to explain their assertion." Was this true, or was it simply another ploy in a legacy of misinformation?

Indeed, a glimpse into the history and development of 'The Nation Of Islam,' shows a group which has traditionally marketed itself as dedicated to the brotherhood, benefit and upliftment of American blacks, while the Nation and the media continually refer to them as the premier American Islamic organization. However, the historical record of the group tells quite a different story. Over the years, a pattern of rampant deceit, manipulation and violence has prevailed, targeting Muslims, black critics, and even its own following, which dates from the very beginning of the movement.

On May 27, 1929, Wallace Dodd Ford, an immigrant New Zealander of Caucasian/Polynesian parentage, was released from California's San Quentin prison after serving three years for selling narcotics in Los Angeles. Ford traveled to Chicago and then Detroit where he posed as a Bible-toting, itinerant silk and rug peddler 'from the East.' Ford attracted a following by blending a mixture of ideas adapted from Christianity, the Qadiani translation of the Qur'an, and numerous Messianic, Depression-era cult leaders, Marcus Garvey, Father Divine etc.

Using up to eighteen different aliases, among them, "W. Fard Muhammad," and "W.D. Fard," Ford variously identified himself as an Arab, a Hawaiian, and a black . He claimed to have been born in Mecca, of being the descendant of Prophet Muhammad, and finally, 'the Apostle of Allah.' During this period,

he met Elijah Poole from Sandersville, Georgia. Poole, an unemployed assembly line worker and former follower of Drew Ali's "Moorish Temple", was mesmerized by Ford's aura and became his devoted follower. Ford changed Poole's name to Elijah Karriem, and on July 4, 1930, a little more than one year after his prison release, Ford, with Karriem's assistance, formed 'the Nation Cult of Islam.'

For a fee of ten dollars, Ford gave Islamic sounding names to cult members, Elijah and his family going through a series of name changes, finally settling on Muhammad. Among Ford's teachings, was a call for followers to sacrifice whites in order for the person 'to return to his home in Mecca.' Followers were also encouraged to believe in human sacrifice, 'of himself or his loved ones if Allah requires it.' In November of 1932, Robert Karriem Harris, one of the earliest members of 'the Nation Cult of Islam', was convicted of murder in Detroit in the sacrificial slaying of Nation follower, James J. Smith, amidst reports of other slayings. This event, referred to in Detroit as the infamous 'Voodoo Murders,' led to the confinement of Elijah Karriem (who at the time used the alias, Ghulam Bogans) to a mental ward, and the banishment of his teacher, Wallace Dodd Ford to Chicago.

The departure of Ford in 1934 led to deadly power struggles within Elijah Karriem's own family, as his brother Khallatt Muhammad threatened Elijah and forced him to flee from Detroit to Chicago. With Ford's departure, Karriem changed his name to Elijah Muhammad, elevated his teacher to the status of 'Allah in person' and himself to 'the Messenger of Allah.' From the 1940's onward, the Nation has recruited its staunchest following from prisons, thus the violent pattern degenerated into a gangster-style reign of terror against ex-'Nation' followers who renounced Elijah Muhammad. The practice of intimidation reached a boiling point during the 1960's and 70's as a number of Nation leaders pitted 'brother against brother' as in a macabre chess game, this amidst reports of Elijah and his family's immorality.

In 1964, Aubrey Barnett, a former Boston minister under Louis X Farrakhan, quit the group after being fed up with the deceptions. Barnett was soon after viciously assaulted on a Boston street by 13 of Elijah's men. On November 5, 1964, ex-member Kenneth Morton, died from internal injuries suffered when he was beaten by four members of 'the Nation.' During the same year, Malcolm X, former national spokesman for Elijah Muhammad, renounced Elijah's organization, made Hajj and became a Muslim, and officially changed his name to Al-Hajj Malik Shabazz; openly declaring Elijah Muhammad to be a false prophet, thief and fornicator. This led to Elijah printing a series of articles critical of Malik Shabazz in issues of *Muhammad Speaks*, referring to Malik Shabazz as a 'hypocrite,' including a call for Malik Shabazz' death written by Louis X Farrakhan.

On January 6, 1965, ex-member Benjamin Brown, who left 'the Nation' to establish a masjid, was shot in front of his masjid. This was followed by a series of unsuccessful attempts on Malik Shabazz' life by Nation members. On February 21, 1965, Malik Shabazz was assassinated by Nation members in

New York City. This was immediately followed by the brutal beating in Boston of Leon 4X Ameer, a former bodyguard for Malik Shabazz. Left in a coma for weeks as a result of the beating, Ameer emerged from the hospital in a vegetative state with permanent brain damage. He died shortly thereafter.

In 1971, twenty-five Nation members walked out of Temple no. 2 in Chicago, with the complaint that not enough money collected from members was reaching poor blacks. This led to the murder of two of the dissidents. In 1972, author Hakeem A. Jamal, a friend of Malik Shabazz and like him, an outspoken critic of Elijah Muhammad, was gunned down by Nation members. On January 18, 1973 in Washington DC, the most gruesome of murders took place when several assassins were dispatched from Elijah Muhammad's Philadelphia branch temple to kill ex-follower Hamaas Abdul Khaalis, who had written dozens of letters to Elijah's temples nationwide, calling Elijah a 'lying deceiver who was stealing his followers' money and dooming them to Hell'. The assassins entered Hamaas' home, finding seven members of his family, all women and children. The assassins beat and shot the women and children numerous times, ransacking the house, then drowning two infants in a sink and tub. Hamaas' daughter Amina, who survived despite being shot six times in the head at close range, recalled that one of the killers asked her, "Why did your father write those letters?" His last words to her were, "Don't mess with Elijah." The killers fled, but after a nationwide manhunt, all were eventually captured and convicted.

Between late 1973 and mid-1974, the city of San Francisco was terrorized by the 'Zebra' serial killings carried out by followers of Elijah Muhammad. Reviving the original 1930's Nation teachings, the killers believed that godhood could be achieved by murdering non-blacks. For a 179-day period, the killers brutally assaulted, robbed, and sodomised a total of twenty-three persons, leaving fifteen dead.

After Elijah Muhammad's death on February 25, 1975, his son, W.D. Mohammed, ascended to the leadership; in the process, reshaping the organization and its beliefs. Yet on November 22, 1975, 12 members of the Islamic Party of North America, which had written newspaper articles denouncing the son's refusal to renounce his father's beliefs, were attacked and beaten with clubs, tire irons and pipes in Newark, New Jersey by followers of W.D. Mohammed.

In 1977, Louis Farrakhan, disgruntled with organizational changes under W.D. Mohammed, left W.D. Mohammed's leadership to re-start the organization and beliefs of the former 'Nation'. His group today commands a following including a variety of gang members, rap artists, and assorted nationalists.

The violent pattern continued in October 1990, where on Howard University campus, fifteen Farrakhan members attacked two Muslim university students following their public criticism of Farrakhan and Elijah Muhammad. In May of 1993, W.D. Mohammed declared in a London interview with *The Muslim*

News, that Louis Farrakhan 'respects Islam' and 'he does a lot of good.' He added: "He is friendly with us and we should be friendly with him."

REFERENCES:

- Braden, Charles Samuel, *These Also Believe: A Study of Modern American Cults and Minority Religious Movements*, (MacMillan, NY, 194 9)
- Breitman, George, Herman Porter & Baxter Smith, *The Assassination of Malcolm X*, (Pathfinder Press, NY, 1976)
- Carson, Claybourne, *Malcolm X, The FBI File*, (Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc. NY, NY 1991)
- Evanzz, Karl, *The Judas Factor, The Plot to Kill Malcolm X*, (Thunder's Mouth Press, NY, 1992)
- Friedly, Michael, *Malcolm X, The Assassination*, (Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc. NY, NY, 1992)
- Howard, Clark, *Zebra: the true account of the 179 days of terror in San Francisco*, (R. Marek Publishers, NY, 1979]
- Melton, J. Gordon, *Encyclopedia of African American Religions*, [with Larry G. Murphy & Gary L. Ward] (Garland Publishing Co., New York, 1993)
- Perry, Bruce, *Malcolm, The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America*, (Station Hill Press, Berrytown, NY, 1991)
- X, Malcolm, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, (Grove Press, Inc. NY, NY, 1965)
- Malcolm X, The Last Speeches*, (Edited by Bruce Perry; Pathfinder Books, NY, NY, 1990)
- February 1965, The Final Speeches*, (Pathfinder Books, NY, NY, 1992)
- Magazine, Journal & Newspaper Articles:**
- Ansari, Zafar Ishaq, *W.D. Muhammad: The Making of a "Black Muslim" Leader (1933-1961)*, (The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Jointly published by AMSS/IIIT, vol. 2, no. 2).
- Barnett, Aubrey, *The Black Muslims Are a Fraud*, (Saturday Evening Post, February 27, 1965)
- Beynon, Erdmann Doane, *The Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit*, (The American Journal of Sociology, The University of Chicago Press, vol. XLIII, July 1937-May 1938)
- Block, Merv, *Elijah Muhammad -black paradox*, (Chicago Sun-Times, March 26, 1972)
- Islamic Party of North America, *'Black Muslims' Still Unbelievers*, (Al-Islam: The Islamic Movement Journal, vol. 4, no. 4 Rajab-Shaban 1395/July-August 1975 & Sept.-Oct. 1975)
- Elijah and Fard Must Go!*, (vol. 4, no. 6, Nov.-Dec. 1975)
- Blood in the Cause of Allah, The Attack-Its Meaning* (vol. 5, no. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1976)
- The Detroit News, *Head of Cult Admits Killing* (Nov. 21, 1932)
- Leader of Cult Called Insane*, (Nov. 22, 1932)
- Leader of Cult to be Quizzed*, (Nov. 23, 1932)
- Cult Slayer Pleads Guilty*, (Nov. 25, 1932)
- The Muslim News, *Imam Warith in London*, (London, May 28, 1993)
- Walsh, Edward, *Farrakhan Says U.S. Concocted Plot Charge*, (The Washington Post, Jan. 18, 1995)

SOURCE: 23rd issue of Nida'ul Islam magazine, April - May 1998,
<http://web.archive.org/web/20050622162608/http://www.islam.org.au/>
