

Nation Of Islam: Part Two of Moving Beyond the X

By Scott Johnson
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One of the major misconceptions surrounding the Nation of Islam today is its religious concepts. It seems that many people in American society don't understand that there is a very clear difference between the Nation of Islam and the worldwide religion of Islam. While the Nation of Islam is purely limited to African-Americans in the United States, the religion of Islam is universal. Al-Islam doesn't cater specifically to black men and women in the U.S., it is a religion for every member of all races and all countries.

The religion of Al-Islam is currently practiced by over one billion people. Al-Islam means peace and

complete submission to Allah (God). Muslims believe that Islam was the religion of Adam and thus the beginning of life. According to the book, *The Religion of Islam and the Nation of Islam: What is the difference?*, by Mustafa El-Amin, Islam was not "perfected as a systematic way of life" until nearly 1400 years ago, when the Prophet Muhammad struggled for 23 years to establish the religion in Egypt. Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet sent by Allah, and he was left with the task of bringing Al-Islam to the Arabs. On the other hand, the Nation of Islam began in the United States in 1930 when Master W.D. Fard appeared and taught a group of followers, which included the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. After W.D. Fard dis-

appeared in 1934, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad took over the movement and went to the streets to show the prostitutes, pimps, and hustlers the way of the Nation.

In terms of their view point of God, the Nation of Islam and Al-Islam differs as well. Al-Islam believes that Allah is infinite. Allah does not have a beginning or an end, and is not capable of making mortal mistakes. Allah is responsible for everyone's creation and has made every member of every race beautiful. This concept is much different from the Nation of Islam, because the Nation believes that God is a black man, who possesses vast knowledge which is passed on with the death of each God. The Nation of Islam's God is a human being which is capable of bearing

children and making mistakes. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad in *Message to the Blackman in America*, says that Allah came to America, from the Holy City in Mecca, in the person of W.D. Fard who took it upon himself to revive the mentally dead which is the American so-called Negro. Another example of the existence of a mortal God in the Nation is Yakub. Yakub is the enemy of Allah, and was born 6,000 years ago. The Nation of Islam believes that Yakub created the white man, and therefore the white man is the devil, who has oppressed the righteous (blacks all over the world) for the last 6,000 years. This belief is obviously quite different from the belief of Al-Islam, because the religion of Islam teaches that everyone is beautiful and it makes no distinction between people of different races.

Another important difference between the Nation of Islam and the religion of Islam is the belief in life after death and the judgment. The belief in life after death is an important element in the religion of Al-Islam. Al-Islam teaches that Allah will raise all of the dead, and at that point, all human beings will have to account for their actions in the physical world. The Nation of Islam doesn't believe in physical resurrection, but mental resurrection. The Nation believes that it is impossible for some spirit to rise out of a dead body and continue to live in spirit form. This way of thinking, according to the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, was a device used by the devils during slavery. Elijah Muhammad said that the devils (whites) created the concept of a spiritual resurrection so that the righteous (blacks) wouldn't dwell in the current conditions and would instead look forward to an everlasting good life in heaven. The slave master could say, "I know things are bad now, but if you are a good slave and do as you are told, then you will go to heaven where you will live with the angels forever." The Nation believes that these ideas are ludicrous, and that the only resurrection is mental resurrection. Mental resurrection involves being made aware that blacks are currently living in what Christians and Muslims refer to as heaven and hell.

Blacks have been oppressed for four hundred years by a system which first enslaved African Americans and now institutionally keeps us in an inferior position. The Nation believes that blacks are in hell right now, and being mentally resurrected and uplifting yourself and your race is the key to experiencing the benefits of a heaven like atmosphere.

A final crucial distinction between the Nation of Islam and Al-Islam is Judgement day. Islam teaches that on Judgement Day, Allah will destroy everything, and each individual will be granted either life in paradise or fire in hell. On this day, Allah will save the righteous (those individuals which believed in Allah and the word of the Holy Koran) and destroy the wicked (nonbelievers). The Nation of Islam teaches that on Judgement day, the wicked (the white devil) will have to be destroyed for their continual persecution of the righteous (the black man and woman) for the last 6,000 years. On this day, a ship will take the righteous to another place for a year, and in the meantime, a fleet of smaller ships will bomb and destroy the devils. By destroying the devil, the righteous will be able to control and rule the earth as they did before Yakub's creation.

There are many more religious differences between the Nation of Islam and Al-Islam. It is also important to realize that many members of the Nation of Islam move onto Al-Islam or the Five Percent Nation (started in Harlem in the 1960's by Clarence 13X). Muhammad Ali and Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X), both began in the Nation only to move towards the religion of Islam. While the Nation of Islam preaches separation of races, and eventually the destruction of a whole race, Islam takes in all members of society. Islam teaches how to have peace within yourself and live amongst members of all races and cultures through a common goal. And that goal is to love and submit to the will of Allah (God).

Malcolm X: In Search of the True Meaning of Al-Islam

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In the minds of a large number of African-Americans, especially on college campuses, there exists an interesting climate: On the one hand, we are in constant search of our past and almost forgotten legacy, while on the other, we look for avenues to channel the frustrations we face as a result of other's prejudices and false perceptions of us. We partake in many discussions and debates in which the works of great African-American reformers such as Elijah Muhammad, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington and the likes are frequently cited. But what I find most troubling is the rising trend in the African-American community to become attached to people such as Malcolm X and refusing to acknowledge what it is that made him the person he was.

Too many people miss the point entirely. I have encountered many people who think they understand Malcolm X and say things like..."Yeah, I'm down with my brother Malcolm; I too

support the Nation of Islam..." Such statements reflect a conflict of interest when one becomes conscious of the turning point in Malcolm's life.

The climax in Malcolm's life was not when he was turned on by the teachings of the Nation of Islam, but rather when he, upon making pilgrimage to Mecca, realized that Islam is not just a religion for blacks; it was about realizing that God never came in the form of any man, not even Fard Muhammad. It was these realizations by Malcolm that set him apart from the majority of ministers in the Nation of Islam during the 1960s.

Malcolm (El Hajj Malik El Shabazz), like Imam Warith Deen Muhammad before him, realized the serious flaws in the old teachings that Fard Muhammad gave to Elijah Muhammad. So when stating support for the Nation of Islam, it is unfair to cite individuals like El Hajj Malik El Shabazz or Muhammad Ali because they later came to reject the spiritual philosophy of the Nation. They did this after receiving knowledge of true Islamic principles, which possessed a more universal scope. To continue this, is to do him a dishonor. The

worst disservice anyone can do to a leader is to remember him for his past mistakes or misunderstandings and ignore his philosophical and/or spiritual growth. So please my brothers and sisters, feel free to support what you wish, but remember El Hajj Malik El Shabazz...the Muslim.

For further information on the difference between Al-Islam, the universal religion for all people, and the black nationalistic movement that is called The Nation of Islam, which was a by-product of American oppressive society of the 1930s, please read the book "The Religion of Islam and The Nation of Islam, What is the Difference?" written by Mustafa El-Amin. Another good source is C. Eric Lincoln's, "From the Nation of Islam to Islam."

Editor's Note: Aneeqah Siddeeq is a first year graduate student in the School of Public Health in the Bio-statistics department. She is a Muslim and will present a number of articles on the history of Islam in America.