

Muslims Begin Observance of Ramadan

By KAREN M. HANNON
Chronicle Staff Writer

Although it's not a national holiday, it is a cultural one.

Muslims all over the world two weeks ago began observing Ramadan, a 30-day period of abstinence practiced by members of the Islamic faith.

Muslims who observe Ramadan do not eat or drink during daylight hours as part of their efforts to learn self-restraint and discipline. Ramadan is practiced during the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, which is based on lunar patterns.

In Winston-Salem's Muslim community, Khalid Griggs, who has been celebrating Ramadan for 22 years, said the period is significant because it has its beginnings in the Koran, the holy book of the Islamic faith.

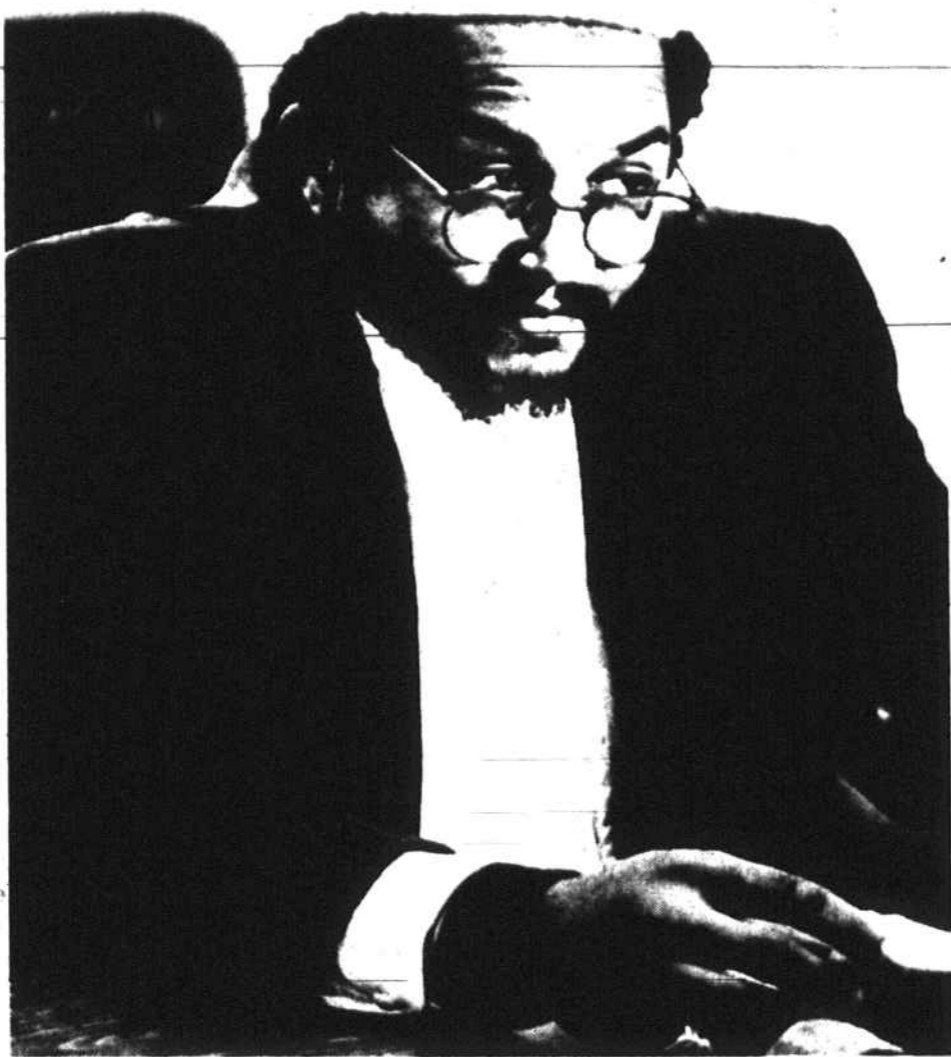
"The Koran mentions that Muhammad was fasting and praying outside the city of Mecca in a cave called Hira," Griggs said. "The angel, Gabriel, appeared to him and this was the first revelation to Muhammad from God, or Allah. Out of recognition of the Koran, Muslims are divinely mandated to abstain from food and drink from dawn to sunset."

Griggs said observing Ramadan helps Muslims practice self-discipline.

"By abstaining from lawful things — food and drink and relations with your spouse — voluntary abstinence gives an individual the strength and discipline to abstain from unlawful things. It helps to elevate our behavior beyond an instinctive level," Griggs said.

"The by-product of fasting is that those of us who are fortunate not to undergo hunger are forced to feel pangs of hunger that so many people in our country and world experience out of necessity," he said. "Ramadan is a social equalizer for consciousness and physical abstinence."

Along with fasting, Griggs said Muslims also increase their hours of devotion and worship during the



Khalid Griggs

daylight hours of Ramadan.

But he said there are exceptions when some Muslims are exempt from fasting.

"If someone has an unhealthy physical condition or if they are sick with the flu, they don't have to fast," Griggs said. "But the days that they don't fast, they have to make those days up once Ramadan is over."

Also, during pregnancy, breastfeeding or during a woman's monthly menstrual cycle, she is not mandated to fast.

"The Koran also makes an exception if you travel long distances," Griggs said. "But we don't always accept that because of today's travel conditions. Muhammad was traveling in the desert, and it might take two or three weeks to go 100 miles. Today, we've got cruise control and air conditioning in our cars, planes and trains."

Mike Cunningham, of Mike Cunningham Photography in Winston-Salem, is a member of the Nation of Islam, but his family isn't observing Ramadan this month. He said they observe it in December.

"We do it in December to cleanse ourselves from the commercialization of Christmas in America," Cunningham said. "During December a lot of people are spending money and talking about Santa Claus. In order to stay righteous in that month, the Nation of Islam observes Ramadan in December."

Cunningham said he doesn't observe Ramadan just because of the arrival of the ninth lunar month. But for Muslims like Griggs, who are in the midst of Ramadan, the period will end "when the new moon is visible or after a complete 30 days," Griggs said.

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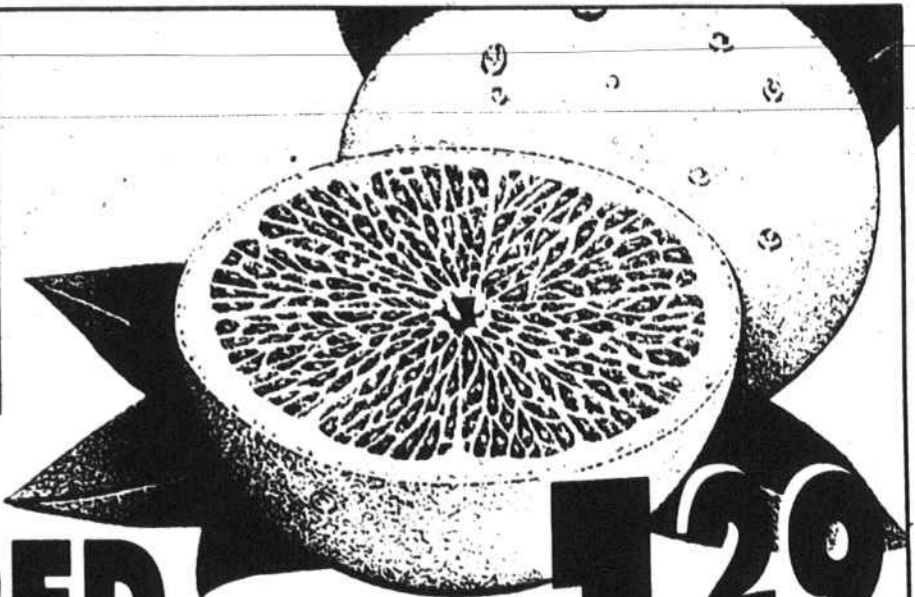


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Baby Contest Was a Success

The William C. Sims Recreation Center, 1201 Alder St. in the Happy Hill Garden Community, sponsored its Black History Baby Contest on March 5.

Infants and toddlers were dressed as their favorite African-American heroes.

The contestants ranged from newborns to three years old.

The babies and mothers who participated in the contest were: Darnail Hardy (Malcolm X), son of Cynthia Hardy; Amanda Hardy (Rosa Parks), daughter of Belinda Hardy; Whitney Goodwine (Angela Davis), daughter of Tracy Goodwine; Anita Craft (Shirley Chisholm), daughter of Debra Grier; Calandra Penn (Patricia Harris), daughter of Alicia Penn; Abria Penn (Ruby Dee), daughter of Alicia Penn; Deneen and Kevin Taylor (Shaka Zulu and

Queen Nefertiti), daughter and son of Roseanna Taylor; Reynita McMillan (Mary Lou Williams), daughter of Felicia Piggott; and Brienne Davis (Rebecca Cole), daughter of Angela Davis.

The 1st place trophy went to Darnell Hardy (Malcolm X); the

2nd-place trophy went to Deneen Taylor (Queen Nefertiti); and the 3rd-place trophy went to Whitney Goodwine (Angela Davis).

All babies and their mothers received gifts for the participation. Regina Barr led the group of judges.



Anita Craft



Brienne Davis



Reynita & Felicia McMillan



Anbria Shanay Penn and Alice Shanelle Penn

Upward Bound Seeking New Students

The Winston-Salem State University Upward Bound Program will conduct its recruitment of new program participants April 1-26.

The Upward Bound program is designed to increase its program participants' level of academic, social, cultural and personal development in order that they may successfully complete high school. Additionally, the program is

intended to make participants more able to gain admission to the college or university of their choice.

Applications are available in the guidance offices of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County middle and high schools for all eight-ninth-and-tenth graders.

For more information, call the Upward Bound office at 750-2670.

Office hours are weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The application deadline is April 26.

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