

Imam sees similarities among world's faiths

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what he wanted him to do and spread the word and goals of the NOI.

"(Malcolm X) became a leader for us, for the young people," Mohammed said. "He was anxious for the young people to see what the Nation of Islam was all about and what the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's message to the black man was all about. We started to come out of the walls of our temple and work in the public scene with Malcolm and then we started to get respect from the American people."

When Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, Mohammed assumed control of the

Nation of Islam and much like Malcolm X before him, moved toward orthodox Islam. Within a year, he changed the name of the organization to the World Community of al-Islam in the West and later changed his own name to Warith Deen Mohammed. He did away with the Fruit of Islam, the Nation's paramilitary organization, and abolished the NOI's dress codes for men and women. Ministers became imams and temples were renamed mosques. Followers were taught to pray as orthodox Muslims, to study the Qu'ran, and follow the five pillars of Islam. Warith Mohammed also taught

that Elijah Muhammad was not a prophet, and that whites were not "blue-eyed devils." He encouraged members to vote and enlist in military service.

"During my leadership, I have pressed for us to broaden our awareness as a Muslim," he said.

Although several thousand Muslims followed Louis Farrakhan when he split from Warith to re-establish the Nation of Islam, most remained with Warith as he rapidly moved his community from the race-based, separatist beliefs of the NOI toward the orthodox practice of Sunni Islam.

"The freedom that God

wants for us in our holy book as human beings created by God who have scared vessels, whether we know it or not, I believe that we have the same ideal of freedom under God that the Christian people have," he said.

But since 9/11 when mainstream media and politicians speak of Islam,

the word terrorist often follows. But Mohammed said that is not true Islam and it is not the way it is viewed by other religious leaders.

"Islam is respect for our common humanity and the desire to improve upon that humanity. That's what it means to me," he said.

Mohammed said that the prophet Muhammad in the

Qu'ran was guided by God to proceed with his life in accord with the direction that Jesus represents for human life.

"Our excellence that we are pursuing is the same thing that the Christians are pursuing when they are pursuing a life like Jesus," Mohammed said. "It's a common bond we have."

Stax museum photos depict soul of black churches

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMPHIS, Tenn.—Ladies in grand dress hats. Men and women overwrought with the Holy Ghost. Arms reaching for heaven.

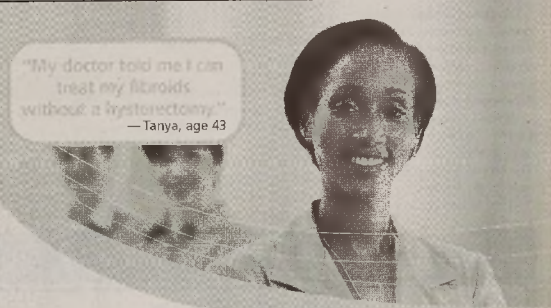
Whether Church of God in Christ or Baptist or Seventh-Day Adventist, Memphis or Baltimore or Philadelphia, some images are common and sometimes exclusive to African-American churches.

Seventy-five of those scenes are on display beginning Friday in "Soul Sanctuary:

Images of the African-American Worship Experience," a traveling exhibit of photographs by former Memphisian Jason Micollo Johnson at the Stax Museum of American Soul Music.

The exhibit of black-and-white photographs, part of the museum's observance of Black History Month, will run through April 29 - in a place where a real church relocated from Duncan, Miss., is on permanent display.

The Charlotte Post



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During Black History Month we celebrate and honor those who had the courage to dream, the confidence to act, and the conviction to believe.