Preserving Our Freedoms and Civil Liberties, Combating and Preventing Terrorism: The History Of Islam Among Urban Blacks In New Jersey
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ABSTRACT

In light of the current ethical challenges facing policy makers in today’s world, where the growing threat of terrorism is seemingly on the rise, the need for global security of the world’s citizens is of paramount importance. How we approach these challenges must be rooted in our understanding of our history. As the late great El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, better known as Malcolm X stated, “History is best qualified to reward our research.” Giving agency to that spirit and the remembrance of the history of the Islamic consciousness movement in African-America in particular and the United States of America in general, will provide some useful tools for adopting better approaches in policymaking. The history of Islam among urban blacks in New Jersey is a case in point. Failure to properly understand that history will only prevent us from establishing best practices in policymaking with regard to preserving our freedoms and civil liberties as well as combating and preventing terrorism. Stated another way, knowing the history can only empower us. And so, this paper will examine the background to the rise of Muslim communities, especially among urban blacks—whose history is not well understood outside its own circles.

INTRODUCTION

There are Good Men in America, but All Are Very Ignorant of Africa—and Its Muslims

Lamine Kebe 1835

You may close your Supreme Court against the black man’s cry for justice, but you cannot, thank God, close against him the ear of a sympathizing world, nor shut up the Court of Heaven. All that is merciful and just on earth and in Heaven will execrate and despise this edict of Taney.

Frederick Douglass May 1857

The two quotes above by Lamine Kebe, an African Muslim enslaved in the United States in antebellum America, and Frederick Douglass, a Native American son, of sorts, also enslaved in antebellum times, captures the essence of the Blackamerican struggle for freedom, justice, equality, and recognition in a hostile land endured by them and their descendants up to the present day. This paper seeks to provide an historical analysis of the Blackamerican struggle to fight oppression, and their efforts to contribute towards the common good on various fronts.

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1 This was a statement made by the African-born Lamine Kebe in 1835, after forty years of American slavery in three Southern states in the United States of America recorded in Allan Austin’s African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles. p. 3
2 Frederick Douglass, in his comments on the Dread Scott decision, in an address in New York City commemorating the anniversary of the American Abolition Society
3 The term Blackamerican, as it is spelled here, to my knowledge, was first used by Dr. Sherman Jackson to describe the descendants of American slaves. I will use it interchangeably with the more common identifiers—Black American and African American.
The popular image of Islam and its relationship to the struggle of urban Black Americans in the collective effort to prevent and combat terrorism in the United States of America is one that has characterized both Islam and Black Americans as being other than what they have stood for—the security of people and the preservation of our freedoms and civil liberties. Among the American population in the United States the general perception of Islam, Black Americans, and Muslims is often a biased and distorted one. Muslims, and the religion of Islam, like African-Americans throughout much of the history of the U.S., are not credited much for the progressive efforts and contributions that they have made to America and the world. Muslims, especially, are perceived and charged by a substantial number of Americans as being religious fanatics, Islamic fundamentalists, Islamic extremists, Islamic terrorists, Islamic radicals, foreign spies, black radicals, narrow-minded, and, thus, people who cannot be fully trusted. Although such terms are frequently used by the haters to describe these people, very seldom are they defined by the people who use them, and, likewise, very seldom do the few who attempt to define them, do so in a way that accurately describes Muslims and what their faith, Islam, teaches. This unfortunate state of affairs has resulted in Muslims being unjustly relegated to a status where they and their faith have been placed on trial, as they, more often than not, are characterized as a people who represent a subversive threat from within to our core American values. If that was true, then suspecting policy makers would be justified in their determination to protect us from such people. But, fortunately it is not true and so policy makers have a responsibility to defend their fellow citizens from slander. To fully appreciate my concern, one only has to consider the dismal Peter King trials aimed at American Muslims, and the recent political attacks initiated by the republican representative, Michelle Bachman, against representatives Huma Abidin, a top aide to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Keith Ellison, a democratic representative from Minn.; and others who have been unfairly branded as foreign spies simply because of their adherence to their Islamic faith.

Of course, such anti-Islamic propaganda and attitudes are as offensive to Muslims as they are un-American, and seems to have resulted in grave misconceptions within America about the nature, history and goals of the Islamic movement. According to the sentiments of many leading Muslim-American organizations: among them, the Islamic Society of North American (ISNA), the Islamic Circle of North American (ICNA), the Muslim American Society (MAS), The Mosque Cares (Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed), The Nation of Islam (NOI), the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)—it is this irresponsible use of language and position that has contributed most, over the years, to the climate of anxiety, fear, and trepidation now prevalent amongst the American people and others throughout the world. Furthermore, many have claimed that it is this reckless use of language and position that has contributed to the continuing lack of trust, understanding, and mutual respect between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Whatever the cause for this “nervous breakdown” in group feeling and communication, only a careful study of history, as the late El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X) meant when he stated in the 1960s that “the study of history is best qualified to reward our research,” can provide adequate information and insight into the roots of the problem. Muslim history in New Jersey provides a pivotal starting point for this discussion.

SLAVES AND MUSLIMS IN THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE NORTH

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4 “Nervous breakdown” was the expression used by Prof. Hettie Williams of Monmouth University, NJ, in her insightful book We Shall Overcome to We Shall Overrun: The Collapse of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Revolt (1962 – 1968), to describe the deterioration of group feeling and resistance to racial injustice on the part of major civil rights organizations in the 1960s.
John Mitros’ Slave Records of Morris County, New Jersey: 1756-1841 and Amir A. Muhammad’s Muslim Veterans of American Wars provide interesting and useful data as evidence of the presence of slavery and Muslims in Northern USA. While Mitros’ book focuses exclusively on the slave population in New Jersey, Muhammad’s text provides a broader insight into a segment of American history that unveils the subtle influence of the Islamic presence in the nation’s military wing. “Slavery as an institution and practice in New Jersey began in the 17th century when English and Dutch settlers brought slaves to their colonies as a result of a severe labor shortage.”5 Kenneth Stamp called it the peculiar institution and it was especially prevalent in New Jersey and New York.

Consequently, a great deal of evidence of the antipathy towards Blacks in New Jersey can be witnessed from the historical record. For example, it is no secret that New York and New Jersey had the most severe slave codes of the northern colonies.6 One example of the severity is that the slave codes dictated castration for any who attempted or had sexual relations with a white woman.7 New Jersey, partly because of its prominence in industry that had a demand in the South, was the last northern state to enact legislation abolishing slavery. During the Civil War the state legislature passed the so-called “Peace Resolutions,” which disputed President Abraham Lincoln’s power to free the slaves of the Confederacy.8 NJ was also the only northern state that failed to ratify the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments.9 Sadly, New Jersey’s most prestigious educational institution, Princeton University (known in 1898 as The College of New Jersey), openly discriminated against African-Americans in its admission practices, and between 1848 and 1945 it had no black graduates.10 The state had separate black public schools, especially in South Jersey, down to the 1950s. And, well into the 1960s Jim Crow segregation practices governed the access of NJ blacks to many theatres, restaurants, swimming pools, and other public accommodations.11 It is against this backdrop that we must examine the struggle of Black Americans in their efforts to preserve freedom in the twentieth century, the rise of Muslim communities, and the growth of Islamic thought among Urban Blacks in the Garden State.

We find in the records of the United States armed services people with an (Arabized) last name during the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War (1861-1865), World War I (1916-1919) and World War II (1938-1946)12 which suggest a Muslim presence since the nation’s founding. Amir Muhammad posits that “at least three soldiers with a Muslim last name were with the Continental troops and three were listed in the Revolutionary War.” “Two of them were known Muslims, Yusuf Ben Ali and Bampett Muhamed, he states; the other four had a Muslim last name.” ‘With respect to the Civil War, there were at least 292 people, he states, who had a Muslim last name.’ ‘The most populous name in the U.S. service records for the Civil War was Hasson with 120 servicemen, followed by Osman with 82 people and Hassan with 52 people.’ ‘In the Draft and Enlistment registration records of World War I

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5 David Mitros, Slave Records of Morris County, New Jersey, Second Edition Revised and Expanded with Foreword by Giles Wright, 2002. p. 1
7 (Wright 1988)
8 (Wright 1988)
9 (Wright 1988)
10 (Wright 1988)
11 (Wright 1988)
Amir Muhammad found 5470 veterans with a Muslim last name, which included 118 different names. ‘The name Muhammad was spelled in 41 different ways in the WWI records, with over 550 people with the last name.’ And, ‘during World War II from 1938-1946 there were at least 1575 people listed with 88 different Muslim Last names. Among these veterans fifteen were women and five were listed as black.’

Many of these veterans had lived in New Jersey. For example, during the Civil War a private Benjamin Allah served in the Company K Unit 14 New Jersey Infantry. George S. Osman served in Company C 31 New Jersey Infantry. During World War I George Hamid born in 1889 in Arabia lived in Jersey City, New Jersey. Atta Muhammad born in 1892 in Jerusalem lived in Newark, New Jersey. Ahmed Hj Mehmed born in 1892 in Cyprus lived in Essex, New Jersey. Haroon Alim, listed in the records as a black man, was born in 1892 in Denton, Maryland, and lived in Salem, New Jersey, where he was drafted into the army in 1942. Angelo Ali was born in 1918 in New Jersey where he lived and enlisted in April 1941. Anthony F. Ali was born in 1927 in New Jersey where he lived and enlisted in 1945. James Ali was born in 1921 in New Jersey where he lived and enlisted in 1940. Sam Ali was born in 1921 in New Jersey where he lived and enlisted in August 1942. George Aziz was born in 1924 in New Jersey where he lived and enlisted in New York in January in 1946. George Hakim was born in 1908 in Turkey lived and enlisted in New Jersey in January 1941. Henry Patrick Hasson was born in 1896 in Trenton, New Jersey where he lived and was drafted in 1942. Jack Hasson was born in 1889 in Constantine Die Turkey, lived in Atlantic, New Jersey where he was drafted in 1942. John Edward Hasson was born in 1895 in Trenton, New Jersey, lived in Mercer, New Jersey where he was drafted in 1942. Muslim immigrants in the Garden State, thus, one might assume, have played an integral role in American military history, as Amir Muhammad’s research suggests.

NEW JERSEY’S MUSLIMS AND THE SOUTHERN CONNECTION

New Jersey is unique among American states because it was there, around 1913, that Islam among African-Americans first became a public phenomenon. New Jersey is also an eastern seaboard state in a northern industrial center of the United States of America, and the state that historians recognize as being central to the development of Muslim communities among Black Americans. Although New Jersey became an important starting point for Muslim community development among African-Americans in the twentieth century, Muslim roots in the U.S. go further back to their southern antecedents. Indeed, enslaved Africans who came to the U.S. through the Middle Passage, and the Muslims among them, were settled primarily on the plantations of the South before the American Civil War (1861-1865). Some of the

13 Ibid. pp. 9 and 10 - For a more detail list of the findings of Muslims or those with a Muslim sounding name listed as veterans see Amir Muhammad’s book Muslim Veterans of American Wars. However, researchers should be careful because Arabic names were often held by the Christians from Greater Syria who were also Arabic-speakers and where many of the immigrants originated from. Phillip M. Kayal, in his article published in Barbara Cunningham’s New Jersey Ethnic Experience, entitled “The Arabic-Speaking People of New Jersey: Syrians, Egyptians, Palestinians,” stated that the emigrants from the Middle East at the turn of the 20th century were primarily Syrian Christians who spoke Arabic. The confusion in identity, Kayal states, was augmented by the classification categories used by immigration authorities, who did not bother to differentiate between “native Syrians,” “Turks,” and “Armenians”—all of whom were considered as coming from “the Turkish Empire.” “It was not until 1899 that the Syrians received separate classification among emigrants from the Ottoman Turkish Empire.”

14 These listings in this paragraph are taken directly from Amir Muhammad’s work Muslim Veterans of American Wars.
famous African Muslims who were enslaved in America are Abdur-Rahman (Mississippi), Job Ben Solomon (Maryland), Omar Ibn Said (North Carolina), Salih Bilali (St. Simon’s Island, Georgia) and Bilali Muhammad (Sapelo Island, Georgia), to name a few. In fact, Professor Allan Austin, author of *African Muslims in Antebellum America*, and Sylviane Diouf, author of *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*, have argued that the Georgia Sea Islands—among them Sapelo and St. Simons mentioned above, were places where enslaved African Muslims had settled before both the Civil War and the northern migration that followed it. It is possible that those islands were also a likely point of origin for some of the proto-African-American Islamizers that Dr. C. Eric Lincoln talked about, such as Noble Drew Ali, Elijah Muhammad, and the lesser known Muhammad Ezaldeen, all of which may have migrated North after having been exposed to Islam in the South. In his *Islam and the Search for African-American Nationhood*, Dennis Walker (quoting Yussuf Naim Kly) mentioned that Noble Drew Ali and Elijah Muhammad were natives of Georgia and the South Carolina coastal region where old people voiced a smattering of garbled Arabic and Islamic prayer formulas for two decades after Drew left it for Newark, NJ (then Chicago). Elijah Muhammad, too, he states, “grew up in that Gullah-speaking region of the South before he left to Detroit, where he helped found the Nation of Islam in 1930.”15 Muhammad Ezaldeen also migrated from the Carolinas’s in the late 19th or early 20th century.16 These three African-American luminaries—Drew Ali, Ezaldeen, and Muhammad, converged in Newark making that city what the anthropologist Dr. Zain Abdullah certainly would call the Black Mecca17 of the U.S. This information is particularly important in light of Austin’s lamentation that “scholars have only recently begun to investigate possible connections between the early Muslims brought here from Africa and Muslim movements that rose in the 1920s in the American North”18 in states such as New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Illinois and Michigan.

**A CULTURE REINVENTED BY AN AMERICAN PEOPLE**

However difficult it maybe to pinpoint the connection between Muslim figures of the 19th and 20th centuries, we do know that by the first quarter of the 20th century New Jersey’s African-Americans who

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17 The term Black Mecca captured our attention again when Dr. Zain Abdullah, an African-American Muslim anthropologist, published in 2010 his book with the same title—*Black Mecca: the African Muslims of Harlem*—which is a riveting account of an African Muslim immigrant population from Senegal that settled in the heart of Harlem, NY. Harlem, often described as a black Mecca as well because of the large black settlements that occurred there in the early 20th century as a result of the Great Migration from the South. Abdullah, himself, although a native of East Orange, an important city that was once a part of Newark, but now a neighboring city of Newark, became quite familiar with the extent of the Islamic influence among urban Blacks in the Greater Newark area. Growing up in Greater Newark, Abdullah’s path to Islam was quite unique compared to that of most of his co-religionists in that he was among the few Muslim-American converts to take the initiative to acquire a command of the Arabic language, as he would learn much from members of the Tabligi Jammat (Indian missionaries) that he encountered and other Arabic speaking immigrants that were gracious enough to allow him to sit and study among them.

claimed Islam had made a commitment to establish institutions that would help preserve their African Islamic heritage. Although unique and reinvented, as a result of their response to the vestiges of slavery, they still saw their new identity as being inextricably linked to their African ancestry and, over time, they became the inheritors of a renewed Islamic faith upon settling in many of the urban centers of the U.S.A. These people, I argue, had a triple heritage\(^{19}\) of sorts which was linked historically to Africa, the Muslim World, and the United States. When Noble Drew Ali (born Timothy Drew) migrated from North Carolina to Newark, New Jersey’s largest and, in many ways, most important city, he helped organized a group of African-Americans around a specific set of beliefs giving them a new Moorish-American identity. Interestingly, this Moorish-American identity had an historical connection to American diplomacy with Morocco in the early stages of the new American republic, which began to take shape in 1776. Morocco, an African Muslim country, became an important ally to the U.S. a year later in 1777 when it, under the leadership of Sultan Muhammad III, became the first country in the world to recognize the independence of the U.S. and granted free rites of passage to all American ships.\(^{20}\) A decade later, “in 1787, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between the U.S. and Morocco on the Delaware River bearing the signatures of Abdel-Khak, Muhammad Ibn Abdullah and George Washington, the first U.S. President.”\(^{21}\) “This formalized relationship made it possible for the subjects of both countries to enjoy the protections and benevolence of their respective governments.”\(^{22}\) “It was agreed that no Moor would be enslaved in the New World, and no American citizen could be enslaved in Moroccan controlled territories.” Although the Americans did not continue to honor the terms of the treaty, the Moorish-Americans of the twentieth century never forgot about it, and therefore would lay claim to this American heritage. They also became nostalgic about and laid claim to a heritage beyond American shores said to be in ancient Morocco, and then Spain, where the Moors were described as just rulers on the continent of Europe for 700 years.\(^{23}\) It all began when the Moors in Morocco were converted to Islam after the Islamic conquest of North Africa where an army of twelve thousand Africans in 711 A.D was recruited and placed under the leadership of the Moorish general, Tarik.\(^{24}\) When the Moors invaded and conquered Spain in the Iberian Peninsula their policies showed tolerance towards the non-Muslim population. The Jews and Catholics, for example, as a matter of policy, were allowed to continue practicing their respective faiths under Muslim rule. Not only that, they were guaranteed rights and privileges that lead to their certain prominence in civic affairs. In assessing the treatment of Jews under Muslim rule, Delacy O’Leary, the late British Orientlist, stated that their prosperity continued and increased under Moorish rule.\(^{25}\) Very often they held high court positions and civil service jobs, and of the Christians and Jews, O’Leary said that they suffered almost no persecution at the hands of the Muslims.\(^{26}\) By comparison, the Muslims had fared very poorly centuries later under Christian domination. The late Ivan Van Sertima, 

\(^{19}\) This is a term coined by the Kenyan-American Muslim scholar, Dr. Ali Mazrui, to describe the identity complexities of continental Africans. Building on Mazrui’s foundation was Dr. Yusef Nurridin who also spoke of a triple heritage existing among African-Americans.


\(^{21}\) Ibid.


\(^{23}\) For more on the Moors see Stanley Lane Poole’s *The Moors in Spain* and Ivan Van Sertima’s *The Golden Age of the Moor*.

\(^{24}\) Ivan Van Sertima, *The Golden Age of the Moor*,

\(^{25}\) Ibid

\(^{26}\) Ibid
and his team of researchers, speaks extensively of this Moorish civilization in his book “The Golden Age of the Moor. John G. Jackson, one of the contributors to that volume, in an explanation of who the Moors were, wrote:

The Moors were people who lived in Morocco. That’s the reason they called it that. The word Moor meant Black. It meant Black People. In ancient times all Africans were called Ethiopians or Kushites. And in the Middle Ages the Africans were called Moors. The word Moor literally means Black, so the Moorish people were the Black people. In Medieval times the name Moor was not restricted to the inhabitants of Morocco, but it was customary to refer to all Africans as Moors. The highly ambiguous word Negro had not yet been invented. The word Negro came up when the [Atlantic] slave trade came in.27

THE PIONEERS AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because of the place of Moorish Spain’s accomplishments in a segment of the Blackamerican Muslim consciousness, understanding this background is very important when trying to understand the rise of Muslim community life and institutional development among African-Americans in New Jersey. The centrality of Muslim community life in New Jersey began in the city of Newark, also NJ’s third oldest city. It is an important development that began in the early years of the twentieth century with the founding of three religious movements by African-Americans. One lead to the establishment of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) (1913) founded by Noble Drew Ali; the second lead to the establishment of the Addeynu Allaha Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA) (1938) founded by Muhammad Ezaldeen; and, the third lead to the establishment of the Temple # 25 of the Nation of Islam (NOI) 1961 founded by Minister James 3X Shabazz. Of the three, Ezaldeen who received his start as a Moorish-American with the name Lomax Bey, directly under Drew Ali,28 was the only one who founded a traditional mosque in Newark after the death of Drew Ali. Shabazz was sent to Newark in 1959 by Elijah Muhammad and stayed among the people of the NOI until 1973, the year he was murdered by a rival group. Although they were not all parishioners of traditional mosque, the first people who were affiliated with the three organizations mentioned above (MSTA, AAUAA, NOI), in one way or another, identified with the religion of Islam. What should be remembered is that their struggle to establish a space for Muslims and African-Americans in New Jersey has been rooted in the larger struggle to preserve freedom for all, especially the disenfranchised black people, but immigrants as well, and legitimize Islam as a welcomed member of the community of American religions. When Noble Drew Ali was said to have approached the U.S. President, believed to be Woodrow Wilson, of his day about promoting Islam among his people, the president is reported to have said that “it would be like trying to put a pair of pants on a donkey; you won’t get a hundred of them.” Yet, history has proven that that president was wrong, as the Islamic influence has had an ever-growing presence among black Americans, so much so that they have been unjustly put under

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27 Ibid
28 Many of us were first exposed to this connection from the research of Shaykh Abdullah Hakim Quick. For more information see his book “Islam and the African in America: The Sunni Experience. Ontario, Canada: Islamic Academy of Canada, 1997.
close surveillance by law enforcement agencies since the days of J. Edgar Hoover, the first director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).\textsuperscript{29}

By 1928 Drew Ali had established the Moorish Divine and National Movement of North America, which served as an umbrella organization for fifteen temples. His empire consisted of established temples in Chicago, Illinois; Charleston, West Virginia; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Lansing and Detroit Michigan; Philadelphia and Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; Pine Buff, Arkansas; Newark, New Jersey; Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio; Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia and Baltimore, Maryland.\textsuperscript{30} The response of African-Americans to his movement was certainly related to the discrimination and racism experienced by them. Yet, in many ways, the experience of the people who joined Drew Ali can be characterized as the late historian Giles Wright described the experience of all African-Americans in the state of New Jersey. In his \textit{The Afro American in New Jersey: A Short History}, Giles Wright wrote: “the experience of African-Americans in New Jersey offers contrasting images: it is a place of hostility and hardship necessitating struggle, and yet a place of succor and opportunity, permitting achievement.”\textsuperscript{31} This paradox is certainly evident in the experience of the African-Americans who joined the Moorish-American movement. Although they were faced with much discrimination, the Moorish-Americans were among those who championed and pioneered the struggle for racial cooperation and religious freedom. This became evident when Drew Ali defended his community’s religious rights. Far from encouraging any brand of racial or religious extremism, he was very particular of teaching his followers about their religious rights and responsibilities under the U.S. Constitution. He is reported to have given public lectures on the prevailing tensions existing between the churches and the MSTA of his time. Below is a sample of his words.

The Moorish Science Temple of America has received some opposition and criticism. The main opposition has come from certain Christian ministers. They have expressed themselves as being opposed to our propagation of the Mohammedan religion. Possibly, because the promotion of the Mohammedan faith among our people in the United States is considered by them in terms of something new. Whatever the reason may be for their opposition, the legal right to oppose citizens, individuals, and organizations alike for their religious beliefs does not exist in the United States. The door of religious freedom made by the American Constitution swings open to all, and people may enter through it and worship as they desire.

\textsuperscript{29} In current times, Muslims in New Jersey have been profiled and put under the surveillance of law enforcement, allegedly because of potential ties to terrorists. But, it was reported that in more than six years of spying on Muslim neighborhoods, the New York Police Department’s secret Demographics Unit never generated a lead or triggered a terrorism investigation. It was further reported that the Demographics Unit is at the heart of a police spying effort built with help from the CIA. The Report claims that the Newark Police Dept. was in cahoots. The Unit created databases on where Muslims lived, shopped, worked and prayed, causing community uproar and triggering an organized response from a broad range of Muslim activists and concerned citizens at a Newark City Council meeting.

\textsuperscript{30} Michael Nash, \textit{Islam Among Urban Blacks}, p.22

\textsuperscript{31} (Wright 1988) p. 13
The journalist Walter Elliot, a reporter for the *Local News* in Orange, New Jersey informed us in his article “Newark’s Moorish-Americans Continue” published in the *Visions Metro Weekly* newspaper that as early as 1934 the national membership for the Moorish Science Temple was published by the September 7, 1934 “News” as over 100,000 and by September 16, 1949 “Newark Star-Ledger” as over 106,000.

**HAJJ HESHAAM JAABER**

It was the late Hajj Heshaam Jaaber, the Muslim Imam from Elizabeth NJ who presided at the janaza of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, better known as Malcolm X, who helped many of us in the New Jersey and tri-state areas understand our history relative to the importance of the historical connection between the Moorish Science Temple (MSTA), the Addeynu Allahe Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA) and the Nation of Islam (NOI) in the struggle of the Blackamerican and Muslim-American communities. Jaaber, who emerged as the most prominent student of Muhammad Ezaldeen, migrated to Elizabeth NJ in the late 1940s from North Carolina where he was born and reared. He attended the segregated Colored Elementary School in a small rural town called Burnsville. Thus, Jim Crow (the practice or policy of segregating or discriminating against Blacks that was common in the U.S.A.) was no stranger to him growing up as a child. After he completed his elementary education he moved on to Polkton Colored High School in Polkton, North Carolina. In 1949 he won a four year scholarship to Morehouse College where he decided to pursue a degree in theology. “The choice to study theology was an easy one to come by because I had been exposed to religion all my life,” stated Jaaber. And, “don’t forget that I have a family background in religion,” he stated. In my family, I have those who call themselves Black Jews; I have Moors and I have Christians.” ‘Most of the Christians were Ethiopian Orthodox,” he stated.

Jaaber would eventually run into difficulties with the conservative Southern White religious and civic establishment in Southern U.S.A. “Due to some differences of opinion I had with a Morehouse College faculty member, I was eventually expelled from the College and lost my scholarship.” I had a problem with my professor who taught the Old Testament.” “He had a problem with me because I wouldn’t talk in class, Jaaber stated.” “We had differences of opinion with respect to the mission of Jesus.” Jaaber then left college and enlisted into the U.S. army in 1950 serving a four-year term. He became a part of the 101st Airborn. After being honorably discharged from the army in 1954, Jaaber started to once again make plans for his future in civilian life. Urged by his mother, Jaaber eventually migrated to the northeast due to the many problems that African-Americans, in general, and, his family in particular, were experiencing in the South. It was a time when the Jim Crow establishment dictated the social order of the day in the South.

Jaaber’s conversion story of how he came to accept Al-Islam is not all that uncommon in the African-American Muslim experience of his generation. As a young man searching for his roots, he had come in contact with the voices and echoes of people like Drew Ali, Marcus Garvey, Shaykh Dawud Faisal, and others. According to Jaaber, the Noble Drew Ali historical link and its relation to the

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32 This can be found in the January 13-19 2006 edition. The *Visions Metro Weekly* has been discontinued but hard copies of the article have been preserved.

33 Muslim funeral prayer

establishment of Muslim community development in New Jersey has been misunderstood and unappreciated by the many African-American Muslims who he posited were/are direct beneficiaries of Drew Ali’s efforts to establish Muslim community life in the state. It is even less understood and appreciated, he thought, by the many immigrant Muslims who presently reside in the country and have decided to make this state their permanent home. Jaaber was a Sunni Muslim, but unlike many of his immigrant brethren who became prominent personalities among who’s who among American Muslims, he had not received the foundation of his religious and Islamic experience and training in any foreign country, nor was he ever a member of Elijah Muhammad’s NOI. The foundation of his religious and Islamic experience, rather, was inextricably tied to the American landscape of which Drew Ali and his MST, Elijah Muhammad and his NOI, and Muhammad Ezaldeen and his AAUAA was an essential part. Jaaber recalled the specific events which led to his entry into the AAUAA.

I came to Elizabeth, New Jersey, right there on Pennsylvania Avenue in 1949. I began to get into the Islamic dawah work in 1955 after I got discharged from the military. I met a brother from the Addeynu Allah Universal Arabic Association Inc. called Abdullah Majeed, and then he introduced me to Wahab Arbubaker. At the time, the organization was on Prince Street in Newark. We used to meet in a little place upstairs. Then we moved to a spot on Hawthorn Avenue in the city of Newark. 35

After joining the AAUAA Jaaber was educated, as he described it, in the Sunnah Islam tradition directly under Ezaldeen who was also aware of the activities of late Wali Akram, the former African-American Ahmadiyyah36 convert, and his efforts to explain Islam proper to African-Americans. Akram eventually split from the Ahmadiyyah movement due to the insensitivity that the Indian immigrants had for the Blackamerican struggle against racism. He founded the First Cleveland Mosque in Ohio in 1934 and eventually became the chief Imam primarily of a group of African-Americans in that part of the country. Jaaber’s Islamic training began in the mid 1950s after he was honorably discharged from the U.S. army. By the 1960s, Jaaber had completed his religious training and had been recognized, after the death of Ezaldeen in 1957, by the Muslim World League as one who could perform in the capacity of an Imam. His social and Islamic activism in the Garden State goes back to the early 1960s when he served in the capacity of national imam, as Ezaldeen’s successor, of the several offices throughout the country that were under the auspices of the AAUAA. During the 1960s he also was a close advisor to the poet/activist LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka at the Spirit House in Newark. Both Baraka and his wife, Amina, were given shahada and Islamic names by Jaaber.37 Jaaber’s inheritance of the chief Imam position of the AAUAA after the death of Ezaldeen positioned him to be a pivotal figure because of the extent to which the AAUAA had been stretched out across the state and country. By the early 1950s the AAUAA’s New

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34 The Ahmadiyyah Movement was an Indian missionary Islamic movement that came to the U.S. and began spreading its religious ideas first among white Americans and then Blackamericans in the 1920s. It was through the Ahmadiyyah that Akram became knowledgeable of the Islamic religion. Akram and Ezaldeen joined forces in the founding of the Uniting Societies of Islam in America after realizing that they had more to gain by working together to preserve their indigenous Muslim status. See Robert Dannin’s Black Pilgrimage to Islam for more on this. Heeshaam Jabber comes out of that tradition.
Jersey chapters were located in Newark, Hammonton, and Whitesboro. The New York chapters were located in the rural areas of Buffalo, West Valley and Rochester. There were also AAUAA chapters in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Jacksonville, Florida; and Cleveland, Columbus and Youngstown Ohio. What is indeed important about the Ezaldeen-Jaaber connection is the evolution from the Moorish-American philosophy to Islam proper that it represented among African-Americans. Jaaber was among those who built on the foundation that was laid by his teacher, Mohammed Ezaldeen. There were certainly others tied to Ezaldeen’s teachings, such as the late Hajj Akeel Karam whose split with Jaaber, after the death of Ezaldeen, resulted in the founding of Masjid Deenul-Lah near Clinton Place in Newark.  

And, Abdullah Yasin, the Amir of the Newark Community Masjid Baytul Khaliq on Chancellor Avenue confirmed Ezaldeen’s role in pioneering the establishment of African-American orthodox communities when he stated that “it is a fact that most of the U.S. Northeastern Orthodox Islamic communities, going back thirty to sixty or more years, emanated from or were directly associated with the Addeynu Allaha Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA) which began under the Amirship of Professor Muhammad Ezaldeen.”

“The individuals in the Muslim organization I belonged to, comprised predominantly of African-Americans, were members of the oldest Sunnah Muslim organization in New Jersey having national scope, the Addeynu Allaha Universal Arabic Association Inc., of which I was the national Imam,” stated Jaaber.

**HAJJ HESHAAM JAABER IN DEFENSE OF OUR FREEDOMS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES**

The story of how Jaaber along with Dr. Ahmed Sadiqq Usman, a Sudanese national, lead a struggle to insist upon recognition of the constitutional rights of Muslim Americans through fighting for the religious (Islamic) burial rights of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, is told in his book *The Final Chapter….I Buried Malcolm: Haj Malik El Shabazz*, published by New Mind Productions in Jersey City, NJ., an independent African-American publisher of books and other information on Islam and Muslims in the West. These events attracted the attention of Dr. Sulayman S. Nyang of the Dept. of African Studies at Howard University and lead developer for the African Voices Project at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C., and perhaps the foremost scholar who has examined the role of Islam among U.S. immigrants and in the African Diaspora. Nyang was present at a historic meeting that occurred between Heshaam Jaaber and Ahmed Sadiqq Usman that brought them together for the first time in more than thirty years after they had buried Malcolm X. In the 1999 Annual Report of Collections and Stories of American Muslims (CSAM) a summary of what was said at that meeting was published.

The two brothers who buried brother El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X) met for the first time in more than thirty years. They had not seen each other since the

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41 The late Imam Muhammad Armiya NuMan was born and reared in Jersey City, NJ and became a member of the NOI in 1969. He became a devout follower of Imam W. Deen Mohammed in 1975, and the Imam of Masjid Muhammad in Jersey City in 1983. Struck with sickle cell anemia at birth, NuMan, assisted by his wife, Zakiyyah, went on to become a publisher after being inspired to take on the challenge by the late Honorable Elijah Muhammad and his son Imam W. Deen Mohammed.
day of Malcolm’s funeral. They explained to us at the workshop about the different trials and problems they had faced trying to find an imam to perform the janazah salat for the fallen hero. They said that the media had created such a climate of fear that many of the imam’s were afraid to bury Brother Malcolm. Brother Usman talked about the relationship he had developed with Brother Malcolm and gave some insight into Malcolm’s mindset when he began his transition from the beliefs of the Nation of Islam to the Sunnah (Orthodox) Islam.

Imam Heshaam Jaaber not only talked about his experience with performing Malcolm’s janazah but also about his experience in perhaps the first African-American Islamic community in the United States, which follows the Sunnah. The community was called the Addeynu Allaha Universal Arabic Association Inc., under the leadership of Professor Ezaldeen.

Professor Ezaldeen [also] known as Lomax Bey was a former member of the Moorish Science Temple under the leadership of Noble Drew Ali. In the mid-1930s he went to Egypt to study the religion of Al-Islam. By the late 1930s he established the AAUAA. By the late 1950s the group established two communities, one in southern New Jersey and the other in upper state New York. Each community owned acres of land, provided housing, a school, and a masjid (mosque) on them. They still own much of the property today. Imam Jaaber became the community’s second leader and Imam until his retirement in the late 1980s.42

Jaaber’s contribution to the struggle for progressive social change in urban America in the 1960s also has not gone unnoticed, by federal authorities either. As is stated in the preface of the *Kerner Report*, *the 1968 Federal Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* lead by then senator Otto Kerner, “the summer of 1967 brought racial disorder again to American cities, deepening the bitter residue of fear and threatening the future of all Americans.”43 Among the New Jersey cities affected by racial tensions and civil unrest between 1962 and 1967 were Newark, Elizabeth, Jersey City, Plainfield, Englewood and New Brunswick.44 The *Nation of Islam*’s presence in Newark was emerging, but had not yet made a significant impact. Though the dynamic Minister James 3X Shabazz had arrived in New Jersey as early as 1959 under the authority of NOI leader, Elijah Muhammad, the first NOI Temple in Newark had not been acquired until 1961. Once the Temple on South Orange Avenue was established, the members of the more media exposed *Nation of Islam*, due to strict instructions from Elijah, were forbidden by Minister James to engage in the activities of the Civil Rights Struggle lead by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. To understand why, it is useful here to reflect on the words of the former Imam of the Islamic Center of East Orange, Ahmed Burhani, who basically said that there was a difference of opinion with respect to methodology between the camp of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the camp of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, more than anything else. The Muslims under Muhammad, he said, had a certain affinity for the people who were involved in the struggle for civil rights even though the general by-law of the NOI was that African-Americans should not be begging the white man for things that we could and should do for ourselves. Although the natural affinity was there, the members of

42 (Muhammad 1999)
43 (Kerner Report: Federal Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders 1968)
44 (Kerner Report: Federal Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders 1968)
the NOI were cautioned not to get directly involved in the politics of the Civil Rights Movement. As a result, Jaaber, and his Sunni Muslim followers, a much smaller group, oftentimes acted alone in their efforts to make the Muslim presence felt in the broader struggle for civil rights. Jaaber became intimately involved in the social activism of the national struggle for civil rights; but the rights he fought for had also to do with religion in addition to race. Faced with the sacred responsibility of officiating at the funeral of African America’s Black Shining Prince El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, in 1965, and working alongside the celebrated poet/activist, Amiri Baraka, helped to catapult Jaaber into the public’s eye. Soon, thereafter, he was asked by federal authorities to serve as a peacemaker during the urban rebellion of 1967 in Newark. The Kerner Report states:

One of those who agreed to be a peacemaker was Heshaam Jaaber. Jaaber, who officiated at Malcolm X’s funeral and has made two pilgrimages to Mecca, is a leader of a small sect of Orthodox Muslims. A teacher of Arabic and Koran at the Spirit House in Newark, he is a militant who impressed the mayor with his sense of responsibility. Although Jaaber believed that certain people were sucking the life blood out of the community—“count the number of taverns and bars in the Elizabeth port area and compare them with the number of recreation facilities”—he had witnessed the carnage in Newark and believed it could serve no purpose to have a riot. Two dozens of his followers, in red fezzes, took to the streets to urge order. He himself traveled about in a car with a bullhorn.

Reportedly, Jaaber played a small but symbolically significant role in assisting the NOI with its doctrinal transition, which started in 1975 with the passing away of Elijah Muhammad, and the new teachings of his son, Wallace Deen Mohammed, who inherited the NOI leadership. (More will be said about the impact of this movement in Newark in the next section). In 1977, Jaaber served as a tour guide for a Nation of Islam delegation on hajj in Saudi Arabia.

Jaaber’s contribution to Muslim community development and life stands out, and his efforts to educate New Jerseyans about Al-Islam show a record of service to the state and the country. His activities and accomplishments certainly played an integral role in building upon the work and legacy of earlier figures associated with the evolution of Muslim community life in the Garden State. Like Drew Ali, and Ezaldeen, Jaaber, too, was an institution builder. He founded the Jehadi Institute. The Dar Islam Masjid located in Elizabeth, NJ, the largest masjid in that city, is an extension of his efforts to establish the Muslim presence in the state. One of his four sons, Ali Jaaber, officiates as imam of the masjid and has served as host of a cable television show titled Mecca Communications, which educates people about al-Islam and the Muslim peoples. Arabic Institute in Morocco, which the Jaaber family became affiliated with, offered opportunities for people to study the Arabic language and Moroccan culture. Thus, Heshaam’s two sons, Ali and Muhammad, both of which studied in Saudi Arabia and described, once, by their father as the most pronounced in spreading the dawah, continue to build upon the foundation that was laid by their late father in the state of NJ. Ali and Muhammad, both fluent Arabic speakers, have become recognized men of Islamic knowledge in NJ and throughout the United States. In his quest to prepare them for life in a brutish world Heshaam Jaaber, the migrant from southern U.S.A., put it this way to his sons as they were youngsters growing up.

I don’t have much to give you fellas as you all grow up. I’ll feed you and clothe you while you’re young. But I’m going to give you both something that’s going to last you. If you study and learn Al-Islam, it will take you over. If you abuse it, it will get you.

Clearly, Jaaber was emphasizing to his sons that he expected for them to remember that Al-Islam was their lifeline as he struggled to demonstrate this heartfelt belief in his own life. He was one of the first to educate New Jerseyans about Islam via radio. Also, few know that he traveled extensively to many Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries with significant Muslim minorities such as Morocco, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Trinidad, Guyana, Venezuela, Austria and Saudi Arabia. Further, Jaaber reports that as a young Imam, he gave the shahaditan to as many as 200 Zulus in South Africa. This legacy of service to Muslim life and his country makes Heshaam Jaaber an important figure in New Jersey’s Sunnah Islam Tradition and in the American religious experience.

**MYTH OF THE GROWING THREAT FROM WITHIN**

If there was a growing threat of terrorism directed towards the American people from within the U.S. in the early twentieth century it certainly did not come from the Blackamericans who became attracted to Islam and saw in that religion a means to advance their cause for the defense of their freedoms and civil liberties. The movement that was under the influence of Noble Drew Ali, for instance, was more concerned with fighting for Black rights in Jim Crow America, the religious rights of those who joined its ranks, and Islam’s defense, than they were in fighting to tear down the Jim Crow system by violent means. They waged their struggle on the intellectual playing ground and stage of resistance to white rule, unlike the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups that employed terror as a means to justify an end to black political and economic advancement. Dr. Shaheed M. Shabazz, in his 2011 dissertation entitled “Brotherhooding: A Grounded Theory Study of A Process From Revolution To Self-Evolution,” speaks of how “those who became affiliated with the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party viewed the [violent] actions of whites toward African-Americans as a form of terrorism and hell on earth.”\(^47\)

Shabazz made a particular reference to their remembrance of the “numerous pictures of African-American males hanging from trees, with wicked looking white men standing next to the hanging African-American.”\(^48\) “These wicked men, he asserts, are not hiding or ashamed of their malicious, immoral targeting of African-Americans.”\(^49\) Yet, with all the racially motivated terror African-Americans encountered, the main concern of those influenced by Islam was in acquiring the freedom to first claim their national identity—Moorish-American—which its adoption invariably was in response to centuries of white rejection and oppression of black humanity. Interestingly, Drew Ali connected the right of the Moorish-Americans to claim that identity as not only a constitutional right, but also as part of a greater struggle that necessitated hope as the late Frederick Douglass understood. Having the knowledge of self was an important weapon that could be used to liberate themselves from the centuries of white Christian domination. His rationale was that all immigrant groups in the United States had knowledge of their


\(^{48}\) Ibid.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
country of origin, and that the U.S. government was aware of the origin of each group as well, including that of the Africans who were brought to the U.S. and made to be slaves. African-Americans, he reasoned, needed to also have the same knowledge of self. The real problem, according to Drew Ali’s logic, was that African-Americans were not aware of their own national origins because of the tragic experience of slavery that had cut them off from any knowledge of their nation of origin.  

Drew Ali, therefore, saw himself as one who would teach his people about their forgotten roots, their true nationality, so to speak, in hopes of restoring their love for their ancestral homeland, Africa, and the last monotheistic religion of the Abrahamic prophets, Islam. Drew Ali taught his followers that all other Americans could trace their roots to a particular country, which solidified their distinct identity in the U.S. as a people, but the same was not true in the case of the descendants of enslaved Africans. For this reason he chose Morocco in North Africa, which would link the twentieth century Blackamerican to an important African Muslim country, friendly with the U.S., which would also solidify their distinct identity as a people and give them political leverage upon which to build a movement and have a voice in the American political system. Drew Ali stated:

If Italians, Greeks, English, Chinese, Japanese, Turks and Arabians are forced to proclaim their free national name and religion before the constitutional government of the United States of America, it is no more than right that the law should be forced upon all other American citizens alike.

He was obviously referring to the importance of African-Americans claiming their Moorish-American nationality and seeing themselves as having been citizens of the Moorish nation prior to their sojourn in the Western world. In his classic work, The World and Africa, W. E. B. DuBois made several references to the Moors, descendants of the Berbers, as being dark skinned or people of color. He wrote of a couple of people who are commonly referred to as two of the greatest figures of Islam as being Bilali-i-Habesh (Bilal of Ethiopia) and Tarik-bin-Zaid. Bilal, the caller of the faithful to prayer, was the Prophet Muhammad’s liberated slave and closest friend to whom he gave precedence over himself in paradise. The Prophet Muhammad, DuBois stated, “liberated all of his slaves, and they were all well known figures in the early Islamic history.” The Prophet also adopted as his own son another Negro, Zayd bin Harith, his third convert, states DuBois, who rose to be one of his greatest generals.

The identities of colored folk such as these have been written out of history. John G. Jackson has noted that up until 1886 few histories of non-Christian civilizations existed in the English language.” Yet, this is said to be true in spite of the fact that “what has been referred to as the golden

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50 Drew Ali apparently did not give much attention to the fact that Africans had been dragged from Africa, to use Prof. Barbara Pogue’s words, to Western shores from many different nations in Western and Central Africa. His focus and emphasis was on helping his followers to understand the classical Moorish history and their connection to it, which had its heyday in Morocco, Northwest Africa, and then Spain after the invasion of the famous Moorish general, Tariq.

51 Dr. Sylviane Diouf in her Servants of Allah

52 W.E.B. DuBois, The World and Africa

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Colored was a term imposed by the white ruling class in the early 20th century to describe African-Americans. The Moorish-Americans rejected the term.

57 Stanley Lane-Poole, the Moors in Spain
age of Islam had received favorable mention by such prominent historians as Edward Gibbon, John William Drapper, and Windwood Reade.” Omissions in the historical narrative relative to the achievements and contributions of Black and non-Christian peoples certainly had to do with the rise of Christian Europe in the 15th century, and the social engineering employed by the English-speaking world which made the construction of race, as we know it, a determining factor in one’s ability to advance in life. Referencing the rebirth of civilization in Europe in the 15th century at a time when African and Asiatic civilizations far outstripped Europe, the rape of Africa, as DuBois characterized it, began and transformed the world.”

That the Moorish-Americans, and certain others, however unorthodox in their religious beliefs, championed the cause of defending the freedoms and civil liberties of those who claimed Al-Islam as their religion in the first half of the 20th century is clear. Even after the death of its figurehead Noble Drew Ali, the Moorish Science Temple of America kept alive the struggle to defend the civil rights of Blackamericans and Muslims. Sadly, because of their heterodox beliefs and practices they were not recognized or appreciated by the various Muslim immigrants who settled in American cities for doing so. This lack of recognition and appreciation certainly lent itself to the growing tensions and disunity that would occur among American Muslims in the Garden State, and throughout the country, in the second half of the 20th century when immigrant Muslims from the Middle East began to settle there and become organized in community life. In New Jersey cities such as Jersey City and Patterson, this became quite evident.

CONCLUSION: THE IMAM W. DEEN MOHAMMED FACTOR

Building on the foundation laid by Drew Ali, Ezaldeen and Jaaber, was Wallace Deen Mohammed, the son of Elijah Muhammad. Like his father, although he was based in Chicago, Illinois, a mid-western city, his influence as a religious leader was deeply felt in New Jersey. This influence began in 1975 when he, as The Imam, led an effort, almost singlehandedly, to transition the NOI from a black separatist organization to one that would, on the one hand, espouse integrationist politics, yet, on the other, call for the creation of a New Africa. Although some among the NOI faithful did not take his vision to heart, most did, even if they were not certain where he was going to take them. Although he was an Islamic leader, he understood and taught his followers that there was no contradiction between one’s identity as African-Americans, and one’s faith in al-Islam. Like Malcolm X, he made it a priority for his followers to study and practice Islam proper, but he also made it a priority for them to study their history and honor the champion—that dynamic African-American soul, as he characterized it—that African-Americans, regardless of faith, share in common. He once stated in an interview “I hope to send out a clear statement on the definition of Islam; that is the most important message.” “The next thing of importance,’ he stated, ‘is that I want to make a clear statement about our association, where we’ve been as Black people, not only as Muslims, but as African-Americans in the United States.”

Imam Mohammed was a strong supporter of good government, and he was one who instilled in his followers a strong sense of civic pride and responsibility. He wanted his followers to embrace the idea

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58 Ibid.
59 W.E.B. DuBois, The World and Africa
60 (Holloway 2004)
61 (Holloway 2004)
that they were Americans, regardless of how others saw them, and therefore had a responsibility to contribute towards the shaping of America's future. To affirm this conviction, in July 1977, at an event he called New Patriotism Day, Imam Mohammed picked up the American flag and told those present “if you’re not willing to carry this flag, you don’t have to. I’ll carry it!” This was certainly one of the most controversial and revolutionary steps taken by the new leader of the NOI. In looking into the future, the Imam sought to improve the image of the NOI community that birth him, and so many others, but had, over the years, become increasingly alienated and stigmatized by its black separatist orientation. Although there were challenges to his vision and policies, he spoke a language that the members of the NOI, by and large, understood and appreciated. Imam Abdul Kareem Muhammad of Masjid Al-Haqq, a small storefront mosque in the Central Ward of Newark, NJ, stated that “what really made the transition for us easier was that Imam W. Deen Mohammed had done an excellent job in giving us the knowledge of the Qur’an and life example of Prophet Muhammad in a way that we could comprehend and appreciate.”

Imam Abdul Kareem Muhammad, as his endorsement by Wallace Deen Mohammed II, son of the late Imam, suggests, has become recognized as one of the strongest northeast supporters of The Mosque Cares, an organization founded by Imam W. Deen Mohammed and inherited by W. Deen Mohammed II. Others, too, such as D. Bilal Beasley, an Essex County Freeholder; Rashidah Hasan, an attorney and president of the Muslim League of Voters; Jimmy Salaam Small, a teacher and former Councilman-at-Large in East Orange; Imam Mustafa El-Amin of Masjid Ibrahim in Newark; Imam Wahy-ud Deen Shareef of Masjid Waarith-ud Deen in Irvington, NJ, and Senior Advisor to Newark Mayor Cory Booker; Imam Qareeb Bashir of the Islamic Center of Ewing, NJ, and Director of the Trenton, NJ, Fire Department; author Mubashir Uqdah, an acclaimed commentator on the language of Imam W. Deen Mohammed; Halim Quduus, an accomplished businessman, Imam Abdul Akbar of Masjid Islam Ali K. Muslim and, Imam Abdul-Aleem Razzaqq of Masjid Ismail in Roselle, NJ, and Community Liaison of the Islamic Community Health Collaborative—all New Jerseyans—have pledged to defend Imam W. Deen Mohammed’s life’s work and legacy. These are just a few of the people who have been influenced by The Imam, and have distinguished themselves in public life, as Imam Mohammed had wished for the role that the leaders of his community would play. All of the people mentioned above, in their own way, have given of themselves, much, and have grappled publicly with the challenges of making the presence of Islam, Muslims, and the voice of Imam W. Deen Mohammed an evident part of the promise of American freedom.

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62 (Akbar 2012)
63 M. Nash, Islam among Urban Blacks, p. 91
64 The community under Imam Abdul Akbar at Masjid Ali K. Muslim, formerly Masjid Mohammed, has made history with their construction of the first masjid in the city of Newark built from the ground up.
References