



In New York "temple," Muslims learn Arabic from Akbar, one of sect leader Elijah Muhammad's six sons.

Black Merchants of Hate

Fanatic and well disciplined, Negro "Muslims" threaten to turn resentment against racial discrimination into open rebellion.

by ALFRED BALK and ALEX HALEY

One pleasant spring evening a few years ago in New York's swarming Negro ghetto, Harlem, a policeman broke up an argument in an old, time-honored way: He clubbed one of the participants over the head and hauled him to the station. There the man was cursed, insulted and beaten until his face and body were bloody.

Up to this point the incident was not unique: police brutality, especially to Negroes, is an old story. But what happened next had never happened before, and it not only shocked the police of New York City but left a deep and lasting impression on law-enforcement officers throughout the country.

The victim of the clubbing belonged to a tightly knit Negro extremist sect known as the Black Muslims. As he was being dragged to the station, a fellow member was racing to alert his "brothers." Within minutes, over 100 sect members were lined up outside the doors of the police station. They were young and muscular, dressed uniformly in dark clothing, only a star-and-crescent ring or lapel pin breaking the black pattern. Their hair was close-cropped. They were intense, silent.

When the injured man was taken to a hospital, they followed. Soon the crowd had grown into a mob of 800, some of them teen-agers with zip guns. There were low, angry mutterings. Police were hesitant to try to disperse the mob, fearing an outbreak. "We'd better talk to Malcolm X," a policeman said.

A meeting was hastily arranged in the office of Negro newspaper editor James Hicks; present were three police officials

and a tall, light-skinned Negro, Malcolm X, the sect's local leader. "That crowd's ready to explode," one police official told him. "Will you use your influence against violence?"

"Guarantee that our brother will get medical treatment," Malcolm said tersely. "Pledge that the men who beat him will be punished."

The police gave him their promise. Then, assured by Hicks that their word could be trusted, Malcolm did something which witnesses still recall with disbelief. He strode to the head of the angry, impatient mob, stood silently, and then flicked his hands. Within seconds the street was empty.

"No man," a policeman said after seeing this, "should have that much power."

This is only one of many incidents that dramatize the awesome discipline and power of this militant, semisecret, anti-white, anti-Christian sect. Led by Georgia-born Elijah Poole, a 65-year-old self-styled "Messenger of Allah" who calls himself "Elijah Muhammad," the Muslims (pronounced Moose-lums) have become the most explosive force in the American civil-rights struggle.

Most Negro extremists can muster only handfuls of people who convene on street corners or in storefront halls. Elijah Muhammad has spoken to as many as 10,000 cheering Negroes at hate-inciting rallies in New York, Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles and other cities. Their next rally, this one their lavish annual convention, will be held February 26 in Chicago's 6,300-seat Coliseum.

Who are the Black Muslims? Are they, as one columnist described them, "the Mau Mau of the American Negro world," and therefore a dangerous threat to our society? Or has the menace of this group been exaggerated?

We were assigned by *The Saturday Evening Post* as a biracial team to find out. For this report we interviewed dozens of civic, governmental and law-enforcement officials, both white and Negro. We talked to leaders of the Negro community. We questioned Black Muslims and their high officials. We gained admission to Muslim temple services and mass rallies. What we learned revealed several widely held misconceptions about the group—some heartening, some deeply disturbing.

To begin with, the Muslims sneer at the main objective of most Negroes: peaceful integration. "There will never be anything more than *token* integration," says Elijah Muhammad. "It's a white man's trick to keep the black man enslaved."

Muslims demand racial separation in exclusively Negro states—large areas of our country from which white men would be driven and Negroes would take control. They openly criticize the men who are leading the fight for Negro rights. Among their most hated targets are Nobel Prize-winning diplomat Ralph Bunche, the Rev. Martin Luther King and U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Thurgood Marshall. Muslims sneeringly call Marshall "The Ugly American."

Moreover the Muslims openly demonstrate their contempt for Negro groups like the N.A.A.C.P., the sit-in demon-

strators and the Freedom Riders. They deride students like James Meredith, who attempt to integrate Southern schools. "Why should any black man lower himself to try and get into a second-rate university?" one Muslim asked us.

Another major Muslim goal is to turn Negroes away from Christianity, which they call "a white man's religion used to enslave the black man." In at least two cases, in Arizona and New Jersey, Muslims have recruited entire congregations of Christian sects by converting the minister. Says Elijah Muhammad: "I'm doing all I can to make the so-called Negroes see that the white race and its religion, Christianity, are their open enemies."

"One thing everyone should understand," a member of a Chicago police undercover unit told us, "is that Elijah Muhammad Poole is not just a run-of-the-mill rabble rouser, nor is his organization just an innocuous regional sect. This man is creating a mass movement on a national scale."

This became immediately clear. Though the Muslims refuse to release membership figures, it is known that Muhammad has an organized following in 80 cities and avid supporters among Negro inmates of at least two dozen state and Federal prisons. The sect owns stores, restaurants and other property in such cities as Chicago, Detroit, New York and Washington, D.C.

In two cities it operates its own accredited schools—in Detroit, a nine-grade "University of Islam" for 140 students, and in Chicago a 12-grade "University" for 430. Muslims further