

Servants of the people

Meet the officials of the World Community of Islam in the West

By Samuel Ayyub Bilal

CHICAGO — As the youthful chairman of the Mathematics Department at Atlanta University in the early 1960s, Dr. Abdul Alim Shabazz found himself appearing on radio, television, in newsprint and at public meetings as an intellectual spokesman for the Nation of Islam.

Known then as Dr. Lonnie X Cross, he was one of less than a handful of authentic Western intellectuals who were at that time brave and committed enough to join a worthy movement hated and opposed by the "establishment." Even in 1960, Dr. Shabazz was referred to by some of the United States' leading media as a first-rate mind.

A leading scientific journal referred to him as a "brilliant but obscure mathematician." By referring to him as obscure, the journal meant that his ideas and work in mathematics had not been publicized enough.

Although he could have secured practically all the funds he wanted from the governmental and the intellectual establishment to further his work as a mathematician, the young professor chose instead to follow his social and moral consciousness and struggle to help establish Islam in North America.

Today, Dr. Shabazz's sense of dedication and commitment is reflected in his present duties as director of the World Community of Islam in the West's Department of Adult Education (WCIWDAE), a job he's held since coming to Chicago in the summer of 1975.

As director of WCIWDAE his goal is to make adult education part of the life-long process of the Bilalian and other developing men and women, he told Bilalian News during a recent interview. He is assisted in his work at WCIWDAE by an able but small and brilliant young staff of eight:

They include his main assistant Professor Farid I. Muhammad, and Dr. Abdul H. Muhammad, Professor Rabanni Muhammad, Professor Mary Ellen Zakyyah, Professor Zahidah Rashid, Professor Ali Baghdadi, Professor Abdul Rahman Aziz, and Professor Zack Ibn Ramza.

Dr. Shabazz's ability to inspire growth and development of rationale in students participating in his adult education program was manifested a long time ago, even before he embraced the religion and social outlook of Islam.



Imam Abdul A. Shabazz

In the early 1960s, math and science students were not particularly prone to participate in student demonstrations. However, members of Atlanta University's math department were among the first students in Atlanta to join the student protest movement which started in North Carolina in the late 1950s.

MEMORABLE PRECEDENT

The students were directly inspired by the social consciousness of Dr. Lonnie X Cross who at that time was also inviting to speak on the Atlanta campus such "dangerous" Bilalians as militant Robert Williams and Malcolm X.

It was mainly his work as a propagator of Islam, however, that led to the first of much religious persecution he was to face.

He was making more and more public appearances as a spokesman for the Nation of Islam during a time when that organization was coming under increasing attacks by its opponents.

"And then stacks of letters began piling up on the desk of Dr. Clements (the late Dr. Rufus Clements was

president of A.U. until his death in 1965).

"He called me into his office and showed me the letters," the pleasant-mannered Dr. Shabazz noted with a smile as he relaxed in a modest chair in the Office of Adult Education located in the World Community of Islam's Pioneer Building on Chicago's South Side.

The letters, many from rich donors, were demanding to know why was a "Black Muslim" (label planted on Nation of Islam to destroy its good image) heading A.U.'s math department and, more importantly, why was he boldly speaking out in defense of the Nation of Islam?

Dr. Shabazz offered his resignation for the good of the university's pocketbook and within a few months — with Islamic strides unbroken — the brilliant young intellectual and social activist had moved to Washington, D.C. and assumed the minister's position over Muhammad Mosque No. 4.

Dr. Shabazz was minister in Washington for more than 10 years and during that time his ministerial and

educational contributions were exceptionally impressive.

"When I became minister in Washington," he said, "the Muhammad Speaks newspaper was selling 8,000 copies per bi-weekly. And then it dropped to 4,000 when the paper went weekly.

FRUITFUL LECTURING

"Then we talked to the Fruit of Islam!" the male unit which was then responsible for the distribution of the paper... he noted. That "talk" and subsequent sales lectures were so effective that "we rose from 4,000 per week in 1963 to 60,000 in 1974. Dr. Shabazz said.

And not only did Muhammad's Mosque in Washington excel in the sale of Muhammad Speaks, it also set an example in the area of education. Dr. Shabazz emphasized.

"At the University of Islam, under a very difficult situation we started a school in spite of poverty, and the absence of physical facilities."

Under Dr. Shabazz's direction the Mosque No. 4 University of Islam developed a first-rate school which set up a curriculum enabling students to graduate with a high-school diploma after nine years.

"We looked at the very best that the Washington and American schools in the U.S. had to offer," he said when discussing how the curriculum was designed. The program was so successful that...

He cited the case of a ninth-grade dropout from the school who went into the 12th grade at public school and became a successful student.

In another instance, a 10th grade University of Islam school student entered Howard University as an engineering student and had a successful career.

Dr. Shabazz's contribution to the work of the WCIW does not stop at his ministerial and educational duties. His colleagues who direct other departments will note that he is always willing to cooperate with them in whatever way he can.

Recently, he was a guest lecturer to a group of young women in one of the local housing projects. The lecture was sponsored by the New Earth Team (NET), which is directed by Imam Ibrahim Kamal Ud-Din.

TOTAL INVOLVEMENT

Dr. Shabazz is very active in Master Elijah Mosque No. 2 the Creations

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