

ELIJAH MUHAMMAD INTERVIEWED

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moon shot would be successful—at least, in one direction—adding, “The men on the moon will have a problem getting back. You can’t shoot yourself back because there’s no water on the moon to create gravity. You can’t have gravity without water.”

However puzzling some of the tenets and practices of the Black Muslim movement are, there can be no denying its appeal for large numbers of Negroes in socially and economically depressed, northern, urban areas. Membership in rural and small town areas is almost negligible. Many converts are disenchanted with Christianity and find solace in a religion that tells them they need not wait for life after death to find heaven, as-

sures them they can have heaven right here on earth.

Furthermore, the Black Muslims’ insistence upon self-reliance seems to awaken the pride of men and women who see salvation in having a nation of their own, with an economy and government run by black people. And certainly the basic belief that black is better than white carries a built-in attraction for anyone who has been oppressed because of color.

In Black Muslim mosques and homes I have visited, this pride in blackness is invariably manifested. Many observers agree that this aspect accounts for the success Mr. Muhammad has had in “cleaning up” his followers. With Malcolm X as my guide, I met former drunkards who are now productive citizens, dope addicts who have kicked the habit, ex-