

# Devils Won't Change, More Negroes Must Heed Muhammad's Call to Islam

By Abdul Basit Naeem

The latest (December, 1966) issue of TRANS-ACTION, a monthly "magazine of the social sciences and modern society" (published under the auspices of the Community Leadership Project of Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.), contains an interesting treatment of my favorite subject—the Nation of Islam in North America.

**THE ARTICLE**, entitled "The Making of a Black Muslim" (subtitled: "The



Naeem

Nation of Islam recruits militants to a n ascetic and dedicated life") is authored by Mr. John R. Howard, a sociologist attached to the University of Oregon.

While it does not endorse the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's teachings or recommend the Islamic doctrine to the black inhabitants of this land (the author, though an "original" or so-called "Negro," is not a Muslim), the article is sig-

nificant in that it is, in my opinion, the first fairly accurate and sympathetic account of the U.S. Muslim movement ever printed in a reputed American periodical.

Mr. Howard's article begins thusly: "... The way of the 'Messenger' is rigorous for those who follow it. The man or woman who becomes a Muslim accepts not only an ideology but an all-encompassing code that amounts to a way of life.

"A GOOD Muslim does a full day's work on an empty stomach. When he finally has his one meal of the day in the evening, it can include no pork, nor can he have drink before or a cigarette after; strict dietary rules are standard procedure, and liquor and smoking are forbidden under any circumstances.

"His recreation is likely to consist of reading the Koran or participating in a demanding round of temple-centered activities, running public meetings or aggressively proselytizing on the streets by selling the Muslim newspaper MUHAMMAD SPEAKS . . ."

The article then points out that "despite allegations of

Muslim violence (adverse publicity from the slaying of Malcolm X supports the erroneous notion that Muslims preach violence) the member's life is basically ascetic.

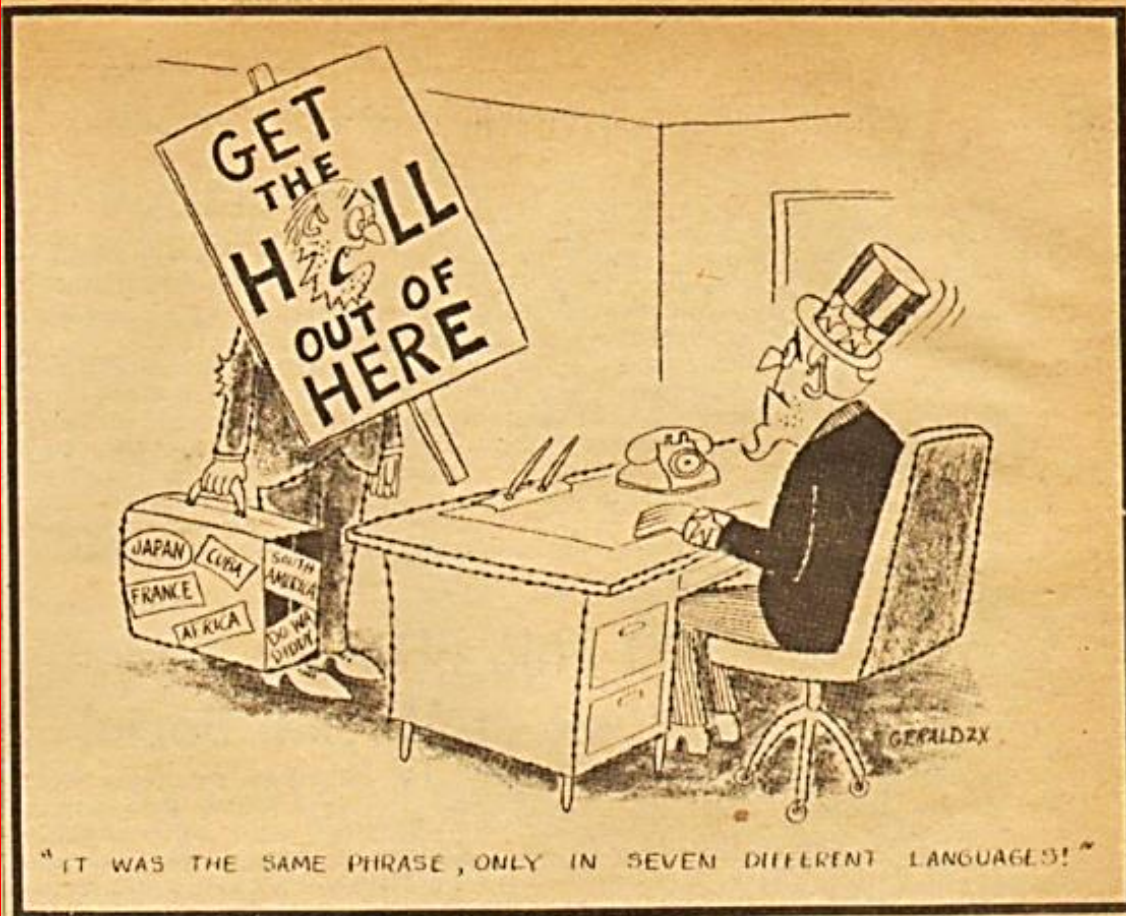
**SUBSEQUENTLY** it raises the question as to why people in an essentially "non-ascetic, hedonistically-oriented society" turn Muslims.

What follows is an extraordinarily objective six-page summary of Prof. Howard's personal findings based, in the main, on the testimonies of 19 West Coast Muslim followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad who "varied in age from 24 to 46 and in education from a few years of grade school to four years of college. . . ."

Space limitations, of course, do not permit me to borrow and quote extensively from this material; I must nevertheless note here a couple of Sociologist Howard's rather impeccable observations:

"This commitment (of a convert to the Nation of Islam) and the new regimen that goes with it has been credited with affecting dramatic personality changes in many members, freeing

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alcoholics from the bottle and drug addicts from the needle . . ."

"... **THE FACT** that the organization can provide (its members) a full social life further isolation from non-Muslims. Participation is not wholly a matter of drudgery, of tramping the streets to sell the paper and studying the ideology. The organization presents programs of entertainment for its members and the public . . ."

The most stimulating thought in the **TRANS-ACTION** treatise, perhaps, is contained in its concluding

paragraph. It reads:

"The Nation of Islam does not in any real sense convert members. Rather, it attracts Negroes who have already, through their own experiences in white America, developed a perspective congruent with that of the Muslim movement. The recruit comes to the door of the temple with the essence of his ideas already formed. The Black Muslims only give this disaffection a voice."

Agreeing with this analysis only strengthens my own personal belief that not just thousands but millions of black Americans will in time respond to the Honorable

Elijah Muhammad's call to Islam. Here is why:

**SINCE WE** know the "devils" aren't likely to and indeed will not change their "nature," the black people's future "experiences in white America" cannot be expected to differ from those in the past. Countless so-called Negroes will consequently continue to develop what Prof. Howard aptly calls "a perspective congruent with that of the Muslim movement" . . . and when "the essence of their ideas is already formed," rush to the doors of Muhammad's Mosques of Islam around the U.S.A.!