

Islam in Tuskegee

By Anna Karriem

The Messenger of Allah (God), the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad has taught and is still teaching today that the greatest hinderance to the freedom of Black people in America is ignorance of Self, God, and the devil coupled with being too lazy to go for self. As a member of the student committee to the Tuskegee Institute Board of Trustees, I met and talked with the Trustees in order to express the wishes of the student body on certain policies, rules, and regulations that only the board members had the authority to change or initiate.

Several of the students on this committee were aware of the teachings of Messenger Muhammad, for we had talked prior to this meeting about the program of Messenger Muhammad regarding the necessity of Black people becoming economically united by pooling their knowledge and financial resources for the collective good of their own kind.

WE (students) suggested that Tuskegee Institute erect a business on a portion of the school's land area (5,189 acres) that would serve several purposes: A. On-the-job training facility for students interested in a career of that type; B. Meet the needs of Macon County residents and the Tuskegee community; and

C. Provide some income for the school as a step toward making it self sufficient, with the aim of building up the physical plant, curriculum and personnel expansion and eventually take away the controlling financial interest that white-owned foundations, Alabama government officials, private individuals and the Federal government have in the school.

We were immediately told by a white member of the board (Mr. Cook) that this was not possible because the school did not have enough capital to start such a business. I asked him where did the school get the capital to build a 1.6 million dollar chapel on the campus. He ignored my question and continued to discourage our proposal.

Mr. Andrew Brimmer of the Federal Reserve Board stated that he would not have anything to do with a separatist movement on the campus to establish economic independence and was joined in this assertion by another Black man, A.G. Gaston, the Black Millionaire residing in Birmingham, Alabama.

Here is the root of the failure of Black Institutions, as Messenger Muhammad teaches, be they financial or educational. We as a people lack the vision and determination necessary to become a progressive and united people. Black intellectuals who are in strategic positions to help their Black brothers to do for self simply become content to be parrots for the white man's philosophy of how far a Black Man should go to help himself.

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