

On Life In The Sudan

By Bayylnah Sharrieff

We could still hear the protest shouts of our male colleagues and gun blasts in the night at our girls' hostel. We felt helpless because we could not help. We were locked in the hostel while the military was fighting our male colleagues.

WE GOT NO sleep that night. We did not know what our fate as students at the University of Khartoum, Sudan, would be, but one thing certain the public was being made aware of the type of government which they had.

News got to us that one second year science student was killed by two bullets (one in the head, the other in the stomach). A bronze bust now stands of him on the path to the university's library.

At 6:30 a.m. the following morning all of the girls in the hostel went to the campus for the funeral. All of the students were standing around and only slight whispers could be heard. It was a very quiet solemn scene. After waiting for a while in front of the administration building some of the spokesmen from the students' union came and informed the others of their plans.

We were told that the dead student's body was at the hospital. We then walked in a large procession of some 2500 students to the hospital. We took the largest main street leading from the university to the hospital for our procession.

Many of our male colleagues were wearing blood stained clothing. Their eyes were red, some had bandages on their limbs and around their heads. None of them had changed their clothing or had any sleep that previous night. Some of them were limping, but the look of determination could be seen in their eyes. It was a very pitiful sight.

It would normally be hard for an American to imagine such a sight, but since the riots in Newark, Watts, Chicago, and Detroit (to name a few) an American can imagine the terrible clash of armed, well disciplined troops against armless, defenseless, untrained students. This was at 7:00 a.m. around the 21st of October, 1964.

As we walked quietly a young white man with glasses ran in among us and stood on the small plot of land in the middle of the avenue facing the procession with a camera. When the male students saw him with the cam-

era, they went after him. They thought that he was an American and as they beat him they cursed the American government.

When I got close to that area, I noticed his accent and knew that he was a German and not an American. I told the students (Sudanese) this and they stopped beating him. His camera had already been destroyed.

WE WAITED at the hospital on the open road for the body of the dead student. It was very hot and dry. The police had denied that they had used any guns on the students. At that time 35 students were in the hospital with bullet wounds. The doctors had to examine the body, and an investigation had to be made to prove or disprove the police statement.

As we waited at the hospital many of the students passed out because of the heat. They were weak due to the turmoil of the previous night. There were very few trees near the hospital, and no shade was present under which to protect ourselves from the intense heat waves of the sun. Many students sat on the ground while we waited. My female colleagues extended their tobies (national dress) over me covering my head, shoulders and arms.

(After this day I wore the tobe whenever I went out of the girls' hostel on such demonstrations. It not only served as a means of protection from the hot sun, but also as a light weight coat, and as a camouflage among the other Sudanese. No one could tell that I was a foreigner.)

Some members of the dead student's family came out of the hospital crying. Others were crying with them to show sympathy. The Sudanese are very sympathetic. If their friend is happy and joyful, they share in the happiness and joy of their friend, as if it were their own; for the sense of Brotherhood is

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exactly that close. If their friend is ill, or sad they share in their friend's sadness and sympathize with his ills. One can really feel their sincerity in their expressions of emotions. And, one feels a part of the whole. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that in Islam every Muslim is a Brother to another Muslim. And this is universal among the Muslims.

THE BODY was given to the students at 10:30 a.m. Some members of the university's staff put on their graduation robes and walked with the students. Some of them carried the student's body.

The body had been washed, then wrapped in a long white cloth. The Muslims do not process the dead human body with preservatives for burial as do the Christians, and therefore must bury their dead within 24 hours after death. The scripture teaches us that from dust we came and to dust we shall return. The Holy Qur-an also teaches us that we are made of

the soil and nourished by the soil and what is of the soil must return to the soil. Muslims in general do not bury their dead in a coffin. The white cloth is all that is between the dead body and the soil. Islam teaches us that death is part of the cycle of nature.

(To be continued)

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